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And Billy Disappeared

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And Billy Disappeared

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By

WALTER BEN HARE

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BOSTON

WALTER H. BAKER & CO.

1920

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And Billy Disappeared

CHARACTERS

HON. R. M. BORDEN	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	<i>the attorney</i>
ISHMAEL	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	<i>the hermit</i>
MR. BILLY	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	<i>the aviator</i>
BUB DUSENBERRY	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	<i>the boy</i>
GENE GREENER	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	<i>the salesman</i>
MARY BLAKE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	<i>the mystery</i>
MISS MATCH	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	<i>the spinster</i>
MRS. GRAY	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	<i>the wife</i>
NANCY BORDEN	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	<i>the débutante</i>
AGGIE BORDEN	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	<i>the child</i>
KITTIE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	<i>the maid</i>

SCENE.—The sun parlor of the Silver Trout Inn in the Adirondack Mountains.

TIME OF PLAYING.—Two and one-fourth hours.

SYNOPSIS

ACT I.—Morning.

ACT II.—The same night.

ACT III.—The next morning.

ACT IV.—A few days later.

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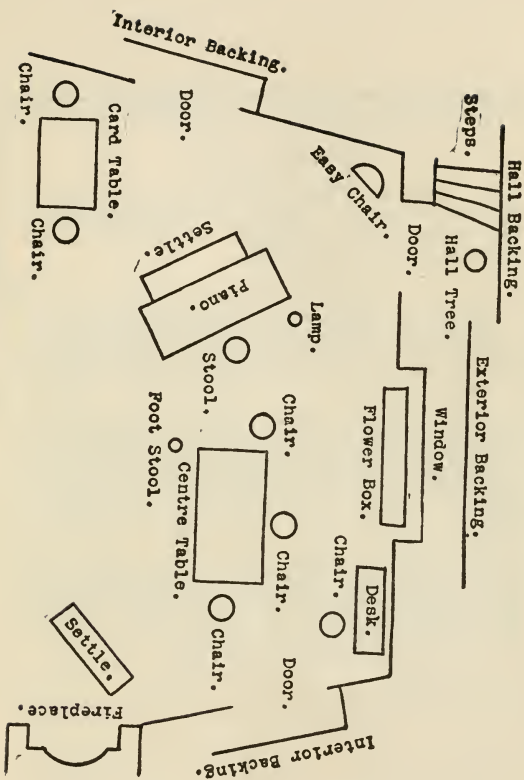


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DIAGRAM OF STAGE SETTING



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And Billy Disappeared

ACT I

SCENE.—*The sun parlor of Silver Trout Inn in the Adirondack Mountains. Boxed interior setting with three doors, one in rear flat a little to the R. of C., designated C. E., one L. 3, designated L., and one R. 2, designated R. Large window in rear flat L. C. Fireplace, preferably of rough stone, down L. Interior backings at L. and R. Hall backing at C. E., showing stairs leading up and off R. Exterior backing at window. The entire stage picture should give the audience the impression of a well-furnished mountain lodge, rather than that of a country hotel. Fur rugs on floor. Small desk and chair in L. upper corner with telephone on desk. A fire in the fireplace; andirons, etc., are in evidence. Cretonne and muslin window draperies. Box of red geraniums in front of the window. Hall-tree near steps back of C. E. Large easy-chair in R. upper corner. Card table and small chairs down R. Large reading table and chairs down C. Upright piano midway between the two tables, its narrow end toward the audience but not standing in a straight line up and down*

stage but slanting obliquely toward the upper R. corner. Piano lamp and stool near the piano. A long settle stands back to back with the piano. Another settle stands near the fireplace in such a position that persons seated thereon face both the fire and the audience. Footstool R. of center table. Red candles on mantel, piano and desk, also vases filled with long stemmed red roses. Indian blanket, books, stationery, etc., on c. table. Birch bark, Indian ornaments and stuffed birds on mantel. Framed fish, animal skins, snow-shoes, Cornell banners, deer horns, etc., on wall give the correct touches of local color.

Before the rise of the curtain the orchestra plays the chorus of "Long, Long Trail" twice, the curtain rising rapidly on the last bar of the second chorus. R. M. BORDEN is discovered down L., looking at his reflection in the mirror over the fireplace. He smiles, arranges his hair, steps back, notes the effect and then arranges his cravat. NANCY BORDEN enters from R., sees him, smiles, comes down c., unobserved by BORDEN. BORDEN fiddles with his mustache, eyebrows, cravat, etc., and then nods and smiles at his reflection in the mirror.

NANCY.

[Standing between the center table and the piano, facing BORDEN.] At it again, Romeo?

BORDEN.

[Starts; recovers his poise; turns to her and smiles.] I was simply arranging my cravat.

NANCY.

[*Sits R. of c. table.*] Yes. I was watching you. It's a good thing that no one but your little sister saw you making love to yourself in a hotel parlor, isn't it, buddy? That might ripple your dignity a little.

BORDEN.

[*Annoyed.*] Don't call me buddy.

NANCY.

What do you want me to call you? Romeo?

BORDEN.

Certainly not. [*Sits L. of table.*] Please don't be absurd.

NANCY.

I like to be absurd. Dick always said that being absurd was one of my chief charms. You're grumpy this morning. I don't see why you have to get us up so early for breakfast just because we're at the Inn; you never did that at home.

BORDEN.

It's good for us.

NANCY.

You just wanted to see who the other guests were. Oh, I know a thing or two, even if I am only eighteen.

[*Enter BUB DUSENBERRY from c. e., carrying a telegram and his cap.*]

BUB.

[*At rear.*] Mornin', squire.

BORDEN.

Good-morning, Dusenberry.

NANCY.

Well, if it isn't little Merry Sunshine!

BUB.

[*Bashfully.*] Mornin', Nancy.

NANCY.

Hello, Skeesicks. How's the boy?

BUB.

[*Comes down R., bashfully twists foot, grins, fiddles with cap, watching NANCY.*] Purty peert, same to ye. I hear you come up here to the Inn to stay a spell.

NANCY.

Yep, we're here for the summer.

[BORDEN *reads the newspaper.*]

BUB.

We'll kinda miss you down in Skee-hawken.
[*Crosses to piano stool.*] Many folks here yit?
[*Standing L. of piano.*]

NANCY.

Not yet. This is the first day, you know. What brings you up the mountain?

BUB.

[*Sits on piano stool.*] Brung up a telygram fer a man. Kinda suspicious, too. It's fer a man named Billy. Anybuddy stoppin' here by that name?

NANCY.

Billy? Billy who?

BUB.

Billy nobody. That's his *last* name, Billy. [*Looks at telegram.*] That's all it says, Mr. Billy, Silver Trout Inn, Skeehawken, New York. Mr. Billy! Queer kind of a name, ain't it?

NANCY.

I'll say so. Never heard it around here in the mountains.

BUB.

So you don't cal'late he's stayin' here?

NANCY.

You might ask Mrs. Gray.

BUB.

Mrs. which?

NANCY.

She's the new proprietor of the Silver Trout Inn.

BUB.

Oh!

NANCY.

But I'm sure there isn't any one here named Billy. There's a Mr. Greener here, I believe. A travelling salesman from Rochester, but *his* name is Gene.

BUB.

The whole thing looks suspicious to me.

NANCY.

What do you mean suspicious?

BUB.

Well, first the way it's addressed. Mr. Billy! That sounds suspicious, right there, and then it's writ in code.

BORDEN.

[*Looks up.*] In code?

BUB.

Yep.

NANCY.

Oh, what does it say?

BUB.

I ain't allowed to tell. Anyhow, it wouldn't mean nothin' to you, ef you did know. Codes don't make sense, 'less'n you know the secret meaning. It might jest say Purple Muskmelons and that might mean to rob the post-office, er sump'm worse. You never kin tell. There ain't many code telygrams comes to Skeehawken and it makes me as suspicious as thunder when we *do* git one. Mebbe this here Mr. Billy will turn out to be the woman who robbed the bank over at Watertown and got away in a automobile. She was headed this way the last they seen of her. I tell you, the hull thing looks suspicious. Writ in code and addressed to a man named Billy fer a last name. Never heerd nothin' like that fer a last name.

NANCY.

I didn't either.

BORDEN.

It is a rather unusual cognomen.

BUB.

What say?

BORDEN.

I merely ventured the assertion that Billy as a surname was a somewhat extraordinary appellation.
[*Resumes his reading.*]

BUB.

Yeah, 'tis so. Them's the very words I remarked to Mr. Slimmens at the telygraph office. [*Slight pause.*] He had to look 'em up in the dictionary.

NANCY.

Maybe it's for some one down in the village.

BUB.

Nup. I seen all the Billies in Skeehawken and they couldn't make head ner tail of the code message. [*Lowers voice mysteriously.*] Mebbe it's a alias. [*Slight pause.*] That means a false name that a crook uses when he wants to be real extry crooked, like Mike the Boozer, er sump'm. Them's the very worstest ones that uses aliases. [*Rises.*] You don't suppose that woman who robbed the bank at Watertown was born under the name of Getaway Bell, do you? [*Slight pause.*] Nup, that's her alias, and I'm here to bet a big round doughnut that Mr. Billy is jest as much a alias as Getaway Bell. You ain't seen no one round here that looks like a crook, have you?

NANCY.

Nobody but brother.

[BORDEN is disgusted and rattles paper angrily.]

BUB.

Oh, it ain't him. I ain't got no suspicions on him. [Crosses to c. e.] I cal'late I'd better go round to the kitchen and see Mis' Gray. Mebbe she'll know who it's fer. That bacon smells right strengthy, don't it? I rid six miles up the mountain without even gittin' a snack o' breakfast, 'count o' me and Mr. Slimmens wantin' to know who this here Mr. Billy was, and I'm so hungry I could eat shoe leather.

NANCY.

Skeesicks, you're a caution.

BUB.

Oh, I ain't braggin', I ain't braggin', but if there's anything crooked goin' on you jest wanta keep your eye on me, that's all, jest keep your eye on Bub Dusenberry.

NANCY.

Are you going on the police force, Bub?

BUB.

Nup, it ain't that. Sump'm bigger.

NANCY.

You're not going to be a detective?

BUB.

Goin' to be? Huh, I am already one. I'm takin' a correspondence course, and I'm on the third lesson.

NANCY.

Oh, that's just grand!

BUB.

You bet it is. Wall, I cal'late I'd better see the lady who owns the Inn and see if I kin find out anything about this Mr. Billy. [*At c. E.*] What did you say her name was?

NANCY.

Mrs. Gray.

BUB.

I'll go round to the kitchen. [*Sniffs.*] Gosh, that bacon smells good. Wall, mornin', squire.

BORDEN.

Good-morning, Dusenberry.

BUB.

Mornin', Nancy. [*Bashful business with cap.*]

NANCY.

Morning, Skeesicks.

BUB.

[*Keeps his eyes on NANCY and backs out c. E., bumping sharply into the corner.*] Gosh! Mornin', Nancy! [*Exit, c. E. to L.*]

BORDEN.

Nancy, you shouldn't flirt with Bub Dusenberry.

NANCY.

I have to flirt with some one to keep in practice.

BORDEN.

You think entirely too much about the men.

NANCY.

[*Angrily.*] Now see here, Honorable Romeo M. Borden, you may be the prosecuting attorney of this county, and you may be my brother, but I'm my own boss and I'll think about anything I please. And you can just scribble that down in your little notebook for future reference. I'm eighteen and I'm going to have a good time while I'm young, and as for you, well, you'd better make a noise like a cake of ice and keep cool.

BORDEN.

Nancy, I'm astonished. On our first day at the Inn, too.

NANCY.

Well, don't get me excited, that's all. And don't boss.

BORDEN.

[*With a sigh.*] Very well. [*Looks around.*] Whatever's become of Aggie?

NANCY.

Oh, I forgot all about Aggie. [*Goes to door at L. and looks out.*] She's still in the dining-room. She's been eating steadily for nearly an hour.

BORDEN.

Call her! That child is worse than an ostrich.

NANCY.

Ostrich? She's worse than that. She's got an appetite like —— [*Insert local name. Calls.*] Aggie! [*Louder.*] Aggie!

AGGIE.

[*Outside at L.*] Whatcha want?

NANCY.

Come here. You've finished your breakfast, haven't you?

AGGIE.

[*Outside.*] I'm not finished, but I ain't got room for any more.

BORDEN.

What grammar! Shocking.

NANCY.

You come here at once. They'll charge you double rates for breakfast. [*Crosses down to former seat.*] Buddy, you ought to speak to Aggie. Some of these days she's going to eat as much as she wants and then, bing! she'll burst like a balloon.

[*Enter AGGIE from L. She is chewing gum vigorously and carries an orange. She crosses down C. and sits on the piano stool.*]

NANCY.

Aggie Borden, where did you get that orange?

AGGIE.

Swiped it. [*Plays piano with one finger.*]

BORDEN.

Swiped it? Such language.

AGGIE.

I learned it from Nancy.

NANCY.

Aren't you ashamed?

AGGIE.

No, I'm not. What's the use of being ashamed?

NANCY.

And you're chewing gum.

AGGIE.

Honest, I can't do anything to please you. What's wrong with chewing gum? I gotta chew something.

NANCY.

Throw it away.

AGGIE.

Aw, now, Nancy, I d' wanna. It's a whole nickel's worth. [*Pulls it out in a long string.*] I only got it last Thursday and now you want me to throw it away. That isn't economy.

NANCY.

It's disgusting. Aggie Borden, you throw that gum away.

AGGIE.

I'll put it in my pocket.

NANCY.

You throw it away.

AGGIE.

Aw, stuff! You just take all the pleasure out of life. [*Crosses to C. E., dragging feet.*]

NANCY.

And never let me see you chew gum again, especially here in the Inn.

AGGIE.

You bet I won't.

NANCY.

Won't what?

AGGIE.

Let you see me.

NANCY.

Throw it away.

AGGIE.

Aw, all right.

[Pretends to throw it away, but puts it in her middy pocket instead, showing action to audience.]

NANCY.

Young ladies don't chew gum in public hotels.

AGGIE.

[Back on piano stool.] Can I eat an orange?

NANCY.

After all that breakfast? Certainly not.

AGGIE.

I can't help it, jest 'cause I get hungry, can I?

NANCY.

Put that orange down and practice your piano lesson.

AGGIE.

I can't play the piano unless I chew gum to keep time.

NANCY.

Didn't you throw that gum away?

AGGIE.

Well, I —

NANCY.

[Crosses to her.] You didn't. Give it to me.
[Pause; AGGIE is sullen.] Give it to me.

AGGIE.

You wouldn't like it. The sweet's all chewed out of it.

NANCY.

I want to throw it away. Where is it?

AGGIE.

[Takes gum from pocket and also a Liberty Bond to which the gum adheres. The bond is crumpled into a wad.] There!

NANCY.

What's this?

AGGIE.

Some paper.

NANCY.

It feels like a bank note. [Spreads it out.] It's a bond, a Liberty Bond. A thousand-dollar Liberty Bond!

AGGIE.

It ain't neither.

NANCY.

Where did you get it? [*Turns to BORDEN.*]
Brother, it's a thousand-dollar bond.

AGGIE.

It's mine.

BORDEN.

[*Takes bond.*] Why, so it is. 'Aggie, where
did you get this?

AGGIE.

I found it.

NANCY.

Found it? Found a thousand dollars? Where?

AGGIE.

Out in the side yard. This morning before break-
fast. I went out to dig some fishin' worms in the
flower-bed and it blew down from above right at
my feet.

BORDEN.

Blew down?

AGGIE.

I saw it flying through the air and I picked it up
and put it in my pocket.

NANCY.

It must have blown out of the window.

BORDEN.

That's strange. I was just reading about some thousand-dollar Liberty Bonds. That robbery at Watertown on Saturday—the woman in the automobile—she stole a package of thousand-dollar Liberty Bonds. [*Looks at bond.*] It's number thirty-two, four, eight, nine, six, four, one. [*Looks at newspaper.*] By George, this is one of the stolen bonds. The missing numbers run from thirty-two forty-eight ninety-six thirty to thirty-two forty-eight ninety-eight thirty. The thief got away with two hundred thousand dollars, and this is one of the bonds. This is very important. Come out and show me exactly where you were standing when you found it.

NANCY.

Shouldn't we tell Mrs. Gray? Maybe she'll know who owns it.

BORDEN.

Certainly not. There is a reward of five thousand dollars for the apprehension of the thief and we have the only clue.

AGGIE.

It's mine. I want it.

BORDEN.

You keep still. Don't say a word about finding anything. Let me investigate this. You won't say anything about it, will you?

AGGIE.

Can I chew the gum?

BORDEN.

Oh, yes. Chew anything you like, only keep still.
[Leads her to c. e.] Now show me just where you were standing.

NANCY.

[Joins them up c.] I want to see, too.

[As BORDEN, AGGIE and NANCY start out rear L. from c. e. MISS MATCH comes down the stairs from rear R. She carries a live cat.

MISS MATCH.

Good-morning. [They respond.] Surely you haven't had breakfast this early.

BORDEN.

Oh, yes. The early birds catch the worm, you know.

MISS MATCH.

I hope I'm not too late. I have a fearful appetite.

AGGIE.

You and me both. I ate everything they had on the table and I'm still hungry.

MISS MATCH.

I was wondering if we couldn't get up a little game of auction this morning, Mr. Borden. It's so nice and cool. You auction, don't you?

BORDEN.

Not much, Miss Match. I poke.

MISS MATCH.

Poke? *Poke?*

NANCY.

He means he's a poker fiend. Isn't it awful?

MISS MATCH.

Men are all fond of poker. [*Simpers.*] I used to have a gentleman friend in the wholesale business in Hamilton, Ohio, who promised to teach me to play poker, but mamma wouldn't allow me to learn. She didn't approve of young girls playing poker.

AGGIE.

Young girls? What do you mean young girls?

MISS MATCH.

Oh, that was several years ago.

AGGIE.

I'll bet it was.

MISS MATCH.

[*Looks toward L.*] Oh, here is Mrs. Gray. Maybe she plays auction.

[*Enter MRS. GRAY from L.*]

NANCY.

We're going for a stroll in the gardens.

[*Exit, rear L., with BORDEN and AGGIE.*]

MISS MATCH.

[*Crosses to L. c., meeting MRS. GRAY.*] You do play auction, don't you, Mrs. Gray?

MRS. GRAY.

Law no, Miss Match. I don't know one card from another.

MISS MATCH.

I'm so ashamed of myself coming down to breakfast so late. On the very first morning, too.

MRS. GRAY.

Oh, you're not late. Kittie will get you anything you like.

MISS MATCH.

Isn't that lovely! But the Bordens finished early, didn't they? I'll have to be on time to-morrow. I hate to eat breakfast alone, or with a lot of women folks. I think a man at the table gives it such an air of distinction, don't you? But there, you'll think I'm awfully giddy! But it's just my temperament. Mamma always says I'm so lively and that that's what makes me so popular. The maid told me another man arrived last night on the late train.

MRS. GRAY.

Yes. A Mr. Greener.

MISS MATCH.

Is he young?

MRS. GRAY.

About twenty-two.

MISS MATCH.

Good looking?

MRS. GRAY.

I thought he looked like a real nice boy. I ain't much of a judge.

MISS MATCH.

He hasn't been down to breakfast yet, has he?

MRS. GRAY.

[Smiles.] No.

MISS MATCH.

Say, Mrs. Gray, who had the room next to mine last night?

MRS. GRAY.

Let me see. You were in twelve, weren't you?

MISS MATCH.

Yes, twelve.

MRS. GRAY.

Miss Blake was in Number Eleven.

MISS MATCH.

The housekeeper?

MRS. GRAY.

Yes. Why?

MISS MATCH.

Do you now I think there's something wrong with that girl.

MRS. GRAY.

With Mary? She wasn't very well last night. Why do you think there's anything wrong with Mary?

MISS MATCH.

Oh, the way she looks at folks as if she was scared to death. And then I heard her crying in her room last night.

MRS. GRAY.

Crying?

MISS MATCH.

Yes, not hollering out loud, or anything like that, but just low subdued sobs like she didn't want any one to hear her. I'm so temperamental anyway, it almost gave me the hysterics the way she took on. Once I thought I'd call you. What do you suppose is the matter with her?

MRS. GRAY.

She's probably a little homesick, that's all. She's been visiting her people at Watertown.

MISS MATCH.

Homesick? Don't you believe it. [*Shakes forefinger impressively.*] There is only one thing on earth can make a girl carry on like she did. Only one thing. [*Short impressive pause.*] A man.

MRS. GRAY.

Oh, I guess you're mistaken. I've known Miss Blake nearly a year over in France and here in New York and I never heard her mention a man. No, she's not interested in men and men ain't interested in her.

MISS MATCH.

Men ain't interested in her? That explains the whole thing. No wonder she was crying. I know just how she felt, the poor thing. Has she met Mr. Borden?

MRS. GRAY.

No, she hasn't seen him yet.

MISS MATCH.

The maid told me he was a flirt. [*Giggles.*] Ain't that awful? But men can't help that, can they? It's just man nature to flirt. Hasn't he got a handsome nose? I wonder if he's engaged or anything like that. You'd better go up and see Miss Blake. She was crying again this morning. Don't tell her I told you. Maybe she wouldn't want it known. It sounded real pathetic and got me so upset that I could hardly get my shoes tied. [*Crosses to door at L.*] My, that coffee smells good. If the other young man comes down to breakfast tell him to come right in and I'll take care of him. I just love to eat breakfast with a man.

[*Giggles and exits at L.*]

MRS. GRAY.

[*Follows her to door L.; after MISS MATCH is well out MRS. GRAY calls.*] Kittie!

KITTIE.

[*Outside at L.*] Yas'm?

MRS. GRAY.

Come here a minute. [*Enter KITTY at L.*]

KITTIE.

Yas'm?

MRS. GRAY.

Go up to Miss Blake's room, Number Eleven, and ask her if she feels well enough to come down to breakfast.

KITTIE.

Is she sick?

MRS. GRAY.

I don't know. She wasn't feeling well last night.

KITTIE.

Maybe I'd better take her up a good dose ob Epsom Bitters.

MRS. GRAY.

No. If she isn't well tell her I'll come up.

KITTIE.

[*At c. e.*] Yas'm.

[*Exit up stairs at rear R. Enter BUB from L.*]

BUB.

Excuse me. The cook said you was in here. You're Mis' Gray, ain't you?

MRS. GRAY.

Yes.

BUB.

I got a telygram.

MRS. GRAY.

For me?

BUB.

Nup. Not unless'n your name's Mr. Billy, and I don't suspicion it is.

MRS. GRAY.

Mr. Billy has engaged a room but I don't expect him before to-morrow. I'll take the telegram.

BUB.

It's a kinda suspicious telygram, Mis' Gray.

MRS. GRAY.

Suspicious?

BUB.

It's writ in a code. Is it all right?

MRS. GRAY.

Is what all right?

BUB.

Wall, you see that name Billy fer a last name don't sound right. That made me suspicious jest as soon as I heerd it. And then when I found it was writ in code—Good-night!—you know they had a big bank robbery over at Watertown and there's five thousand dollars reward offered fer Getaway Bell, her as committed the robbery. She escaped in a automobile headed in this direction. I read that in yesterday's paper and I ain't slep' a wink since. Maybe this Mr. Billy is Getaway Bell in disguise.

MRS. GRAY.

Nonsense!

BUB.

You never kin tell. It's jest little things like that that makes clues.

MRS. GRAY.

I'll take the telegram, please.

BUB.

All right, you're the doctor. [*Hands her the telegram.*] Sign right there. [*Hands her book and pencil.*] And ef anything happens, wall, you can't blame it on Bub Dusenberry, nohow.

MRS. GRAY.

Who's Bub Dusenberry?

BUB.

Me. [*Takes book.*] Twenty-five cents charges.

MRS. GRAY.

All right. [*Hands him a quarter.*]

BUB.

Say, Mis' Gray——

MRS. GRAY.

Well?

BUB.

You ain't got no opening up here at the Inn fer a good live boy to git a job, have you?

MRS. GRAY.

What kind of a job?

BUB.

Wall, I'd ruther be a detective than anything else, but I don't cal'late you need a detective. I'd be a awful handy bell-boy, er a night clerk, and I kin make the beds, split wood, carry coal, peel potatoes, cut hair, tend the furnace, wash the winders, mind babies fer folks, play the talkin' machine and tend bar!

MRS. GRAY.

Where are you working now?

BUB.

No place reg'lar. I ain't got a stiddy job just now. I carry messages fer the telygraph office and

jerk sody on Saturday at the drug-store. Mornings I turn the wringer and hang out the clothes fer maw and at nights I cook quick lunches at the depot café. I'm aimin' to be a detective some day and already took three lessons in a correspondence school. Not a ordinary detective, y' know—but one of them kind that goes around in disguise and hunts fer clues. Ain't got a opening, have you?

[Enter KITTIE down stairs at rear R.

MRS. GRAY.

I rather think I have. How would you like to do the general chores for ten dollars and board?

BUB.

A month?

MRS. GRAY.

No, a week.

BUB.

A week? [*Does dance step and poses.*] I'm on, and I'm ready to start right away.

[*Pronounce the last two words very fast.*

MRS. GRAY.

As quick as that?

BUB.

[*Rapidly.*] As quick as that.

MRS. GRAY.

Kittie, how is Miss Blake?

KITTIE.

She ain' a feelin' right well, Mis' Mabel. I 'lowed she'd better lemme make her a good dose ob

Epsom Bitters, but she didn't seem to want none. She's comin' down.

MRS. GRAY.

This young man is goin' to help you in the kitchen, Kittie. His name is Dusenberry.

KITTIE.

Gooseberry?

BUB.

Naw, nothin' like it. Dusenberry, but folks generally call me Bub.

KITTIE.

You say you wanta start right away?

MRS. GRAY.

Yes. Have you anything for him to do?

KITTIE.

Has I? *Has I?* Come on wif me, boy. I got about 'leben tons ob potatoes to peel for dinner and I shore does need some assistance. [*Waddles to door at L.*] Dis yere gittin' started in a new hotel am mighty strainin' business. Mighty strainin'!

[*Exit L., followed by BUB. Soft music: chorus of "Long, Long Trail."*]

MRS. GRAY.

[*Reads address on telegram.*] Mr. Billy, Silver Trout Inn, Skeehawken, New York. [*Pause.*] My last hope, my last hope! [*Puts telegram on table. After slight pause MARY BLAKE enters*]

down stairs up R. She pauses in C. E., registering sadness. MRS. GRAY at L. of center table.] It's all right, Mary. There's no one here. [MARY comes down C. slowly and sadly, and sits R. of center table. MRS. GRAY sits at L. of table. MARY sighs and puts handkerchief to her eyes.] Ain't you feeling well, Mary?

MARY.

Oh, I mustn't give way like this, I mustn't. It isn't right. You are so kind to me, Mrs. Gray. You've helped me so much. I'll try to control myself, indeed I will. I've been feeling a little blue, I guess. You see my visit home wasn't much of a success. The house was closed up and no one in Watertown seemed to remember me.

MRS. GRAY.

Now, don't you worry, Mary. I guess you've got friends here.

MARY.

I know it. But it's all so different, so new—this is the beginning of a new life for me, it's a new start and I ——— [Pauses, shakes head sadly.]

MRS. GRAY.

I know just how you feel, Mary. But if it's a new start, make it a good one. Let us help each other. We have each gone through with enough horror over there in France to make us want to forget the past. And we will. We'll take a fresh start together. No one knows you here. You can take a new lease on life and let the dead past bury its dead.

MARY.

How can I? [*Passionately.*] How can I—when every man or woman I see seems to be shrieking my secret in my very face, “Mary Blake, I know you! You can’t hide away any longer. I know you! I know you!” [*Rises emotionally. The music ends.*]

MRS. GRAY.

[*Comes to her and takes her in her arms.*] There, there, honey. You’re all upset. You’re nervous. You’ll be all right after breakfast.

MARY.

I didn’t seem to mind it over there in France where I was doing what I could to help others more miserable than myself, but last week when I visited my old home it all came back to me again. The fear, the dejection, the shame! I try to forget, I know it’s best to forget, but I can’t, I can’t!
[*Weeps on MRS. GRAY’S shoulder.*]

MRS. GRAY.

You’ll have to be brave, Mary. Every soul has its big battle and this is yours. You’ve got to make your big fight all alone, but you’ve got to win. It won’t be easy, but you’ve got to meet your trouble face to face and conquer it. You can do it. I know you can. I have seen you over there in the hospital with the battle raging outside. Do you remember that night when you assisted in an operation and the shells of the enemy shattered the walls of the very room where you were working? You didn’t give way then, and you won’t give way now. I’ll help you.

MARY.

I know you will. It seems that God sent you to me just when I needed you the most. You have been like a dear mother to me—the only one I have ever known—and I *will* try to be my old self again. I can do it. I will! [*Stands by center table.*]

MRS. GRAY.

That's right. That's the way I like to hear my girl talk. Now, forget everything that has worried you and take a fresh start. Let's go in to breakfast.

MARY.

[*Has picked up the telegram from the table, reads the name and starts.*] Mr. Billy!

MRS. GRAY.

Yes. It came this morning. I'm expecting him some time to-morrow.

MARY.

It's a peculiar name.

MRS. GRAY.

Isn't it? Did you ever hear it before?

MARY.

Yes, I knew a man by that name in France.

MRS. GRAY.

A soldier?

MARY.

I don't think so. There was something very mysterious about him. He never used to wear any uniform, and no one knew his connection with the

army, but he was severely wounded at Château-Thierry. [*Slight pause, then she looks MRS. GRAY steadily in the eyes.*] Sometimes I think he was in the secret service.

MRS. GRAY.

Maybe he was a civilian.

MARY.

He was an American, I'm sure.

MRS. GRAY.

Many American civilians were in the danger zone.

MARY.

But he was in the midst of the battle. I always wondered why he wasn't in uniform. The boys told wonderful tales of his bravery. He led three or four of our privates into a German dugout and captured a machine-gun and five of the enemy. There was a terrible hand-to-hand fight and Mr. Billy was badly wounded. Do you suppose he is here in New York?

MRS. GRAY.

I don't know. My lawyers wrote to me that a Mr. Billy would be here at the Inn for a few days for a business discussion. They recommended him highly, but I rather imagined that he would be an elderly gentleman. Did you like him?

MARY.

Very much. Every one liked him. He was in our hospital nearly three months, then one day he disappeared.

MRS. GRAY.

Disappeared? What for?

MARY.

No one knew. We never learned what had become of him. I thought at the time it was rather strange, but probably he was transferred to some other hospital.

MRS. GRAY.

He must have made quite an impression on [*slight pause, as she looks slyly at MARY*] the nurses.

MARY.

Yes. I remember one night —

[*Enter GENE GREENER rapidly down the stairs at rear R.*]

GENE.

[*Loud, quick and cheerful.*] Mornin', ladies.

MRS. GRAY.

Good-morning, Mr. Greener. Miss Blake, Mr. Greener. Miss Blake is the housekeeper.

GENE.

Then I've got to apologize to the housekeeper the first thing. I hope I'm not too late for breakfast. You see, Miss Blake, I didn't get in until nearly midnight, came in on the night train, hit the hay right away and didn't wake up till ten minutes ago. I set my alarm clock for seven but it never fazed me. If I can have a cup of coffee I'll promise never to oversleep again.

MRS. GRAY.

Why, certainly. Go right in the dining-room. Miss Match is in there.

GENE.

Miss Match? Parlor or sulphur?

MRS. GRAY.

Oh, parlor, decidedly.

GENE.

I hope she won't flare up when I strike her.

MRS. GRAY.

Oh, no. She's just dying to meet you.

GENE.

Oh, she's one of the dying kind, is she? Well, I'll see you after breakfast. No mail for me, was there?

MRS. GRAY.

No.

GENE.

I didn't look for any, so I'm not disappointed. Now to meet the languishing Miss Match.

[Exit, at L.]

MRS. GRAY.

Mary, you'd better go in and get a cup of coffee.

MARY.

Yes, I will. [Starts to L.] Then I'm going over the whole house and start a regular cleaning campaign before the third-floor rooms are filled.

MRS. GRAY.

That's right. Hard work, they say, drives trouble away. I hope my Mr. Billy turns out to be your hospital hero. He intends to stay a week at least and it would do you good to meet an old friend again.

MARY.

Yes, I'm sure it would, especially a man like Mr. Billy. [Exit, L.

MRS. GRAY.

[Looks after her and smiles; slight pause.] And I was just like that thirty years ago. Me and John! [Sighs.] I wonder if I'll ever see my John again.

[The noise of a distant aeroplane is heard; this effect may be simulated by the muffled sound of a motor-cycle. Enter NANCY, AGGIE and BORDEN from C. E. from rear L.

AGGIE.

Oh, Mis' Gray, what do you think?

NANCY.

There's an air-ship flying up the mountain.

MRS. GRAY.

An air-ship? Yes, I thought I heard it.

[All go to window and look out.

BORDEN.

Can you see him? [Enter MISS MATCH from L.

MISS MATCH.

[At window.] It sounded like an aeroplane.

NANCY.

Yes, we saw it.

AGGIE.

Oh, I wonder if they're going to drop down a bomb or anything.

MISS MATCH.

[*Suddenly points and exclaims.*] There he is. See him! He's coming here.

MRS. GRAY.

How low he is flying.

BORDEN.

He's trying to make a landing.

MISS MATCH.

Maybe he's looking for me. I have several gentlemen friends in the air service. I'm just crazy to have one of 'em take me up in the air.

NANCY.

He's lighting. Maybe he's out of gas.

AGGIE.

[*Very excited.*] Oh, I want to see him light. I want to see him light.

[*Rushes out C. E. and off up L.*]

BORDEN.

Come, Nancy.

[*Follows AGGIE out.*]

NANCY.

Isn't it exciting?

[*Exit, C. E. to rear L.*]

MRS. GRAY.

[To MISS MATCH.] Don't you want to see him?

MISS MATCH.

Oh, I couldn't bear it. It would make me so nervous, and he might be wounded or something. I can't stand to see any one in danger, it makes me so fainty. I'd better go back and finish my coffee. Tell the air-ship man to stay to breakfast. I'll wait for him in the dining-room.

[Exit, L. Enter BUB from L.

BUB.

Say, that feller is tryin' to light right in the middle of our rhubarb patch. He's certainly got his nerve. You want me to throw him out?

MRS. GRAY.

Oh, no. Go out and see if you can help him. Ask him in to breakfast.

[BUB exits at C. E. to rear L. A shrill scream is heard off L. from MISS MATCH. MRS. GRAY, who has followed BUB to the door, now turns and comes down C. Enter, from L., MISS MATCH, wringing her hands and much agitated.

MISS MATCH.

Oh, oh, what do you think? Oh!

[Feebly sinks in chair down L.

MRS. GRAY.

[Hurries to her.] What is it?

MISS MATCH.

Kitty!

MRS. GRAY.

Kittie? What's happened to Kittie?

MISS MATCH.

She's disappeared.

MRS. GRAY.

[*Startled.*] Disappeared? Kittie?

MISS MATCH.

She's run away.

[*Crosses to R., much agitated, wringing her hands and groaning.*]

MRS. GRAY.

[*Also excited, following her.*] Isn't she in the kitchen?

MISS MATCH.

No, I looked there. She was on Mr. Greener's lap in the dining-room when I came in and she jumped down and ran away.

MRS. GRAY.

On Mr. Greener's lap? Kittie!

MISS MATCH.

He ran after her and kicked her.

MRS. GRAY.

Kicked her?

MISS MATCH.

Right in the pantry, right before my very eyes.
I never saw such a man.

MRS. GRAY.

I'll see what it's all about.

[Starts toward L. Enter GENE from L.]

MISS MATCH.

There he is. Cruel, heartless man. She's gone
—you've driven her away. She's lost to me for-
ever.

GENE.

[At L., savagely.] Then keep her out of the
dining-room.

MRS. GRAY.

But that's where she belongs.

GENE.

You see, it was this way. She was on my
lap——

MRS. GRAY.

What was she doing on your lap?

GENE.

Just sitting there.

MISS MATCH.

[At R.] Yes, I came in and saw them.

GENE.

Then she jumped down and I must have stepped
on her tail. [Comes to L. C.]

MRS. GRAY.

[*At c.*] On her tail! [*Enter KITTIE from L.; she stands in the doorway.*] Kittie, what were you doing on Mr. Greener's lap?

[*KITTIE looks astonished, blinking her eyes. All hold tableau a moment.*]

KITTIE.

[*After pause.*] On his lap? On whose lap?

GENE.

[*To MRS. GRAY.*] No, no, you don't understand.

KITTIE.

I ain't been on nobody's lap. I's a 'spectable cullud membah ob de African-Mefodist Church, I is, and I don't go settin' in no man's lap.

[*Crosses down L.*]

GENE.

It was the cat.

MISS MATCH.

[*At R.*] Yes, my poor little kitty.

GENE.

Never mind, I'll buy you another one if she don't come back. [*Enter BUB from c. e., carrying the cat.*]

BUB.

Anybody lost a cat?

MISS MATCH.

[*Rushes to him at rear c.*] Oh, you brave, kind, darling boy! [*Kisses BUB, who stands aghast.*] It's my kitty. [*Takes cat.*] Come to muzzer, dol-

ling. Did nassy old man kick you in the pantry?
Come wiz muzzer.

[*Exit, C. E., up stairs and off rear R.*]

GENE.

Now maybe I can finish my breakfast.

[*Starts off L.*]

MRS. GRAY.

[*Following him.*] But don't take Kittie in your
lap any more. [Crosses up C.

GENE.

You bet I won't.

[*Exit, L.*]

KITTIE.

If dat man eber takes *me* in his lap, I'll carve him
on de head wif a razor, and I'll carve him deep.
[*Waddling to door, L.*] I ain't gwine to let *no* man
fool wif me. No, ma'am. I ain't dat kin' ob a girl.

[*Exit, L.*]

BUB.

There was two men in that air-ship car. One of
'em's sick, er sump'm.

MRS. GRAY.

Sick?

[*Hurries to C. E.*]

BUB.

It looks like old Ishmael, who lives up in the
mountains.

[*Exit, C. E. and off rear L., followed by MRS.
GRAY. After a slight pause, MISS MATCH
comes down stairs, entering from C. E.
from up R.*]

MISS MATCH.

[*In her giddy old-maid tones.*] Is there any one here? [*She looks around and as soon as she realizes that she is alone a complete change occurs in her deportment,—she is no longer the farcical old maid, but a keen, clever woman. Take plenty of time for the following pantomime, as it is very important. She glances quickly around, crosses to table at c., where MRS. GRAY left the telegram. MISS MATCH quickly takes it up and reads the address.*] Mr. Billy, Silver Trout Inn, Skeehawken, New York. [*She faces front and pauses as if puzzled.*] Hm! [*Glances cautiously around, carefully opens message and reads it hastily. She frowns.*] A code message. [*Picks up card and pencil from the table and copies the message on the card, reading aloud from telegram.*] Seventeen—36K—nine—naught—Watertown. [*She starts on the last word, registering fright, repeats in a whisper of fear.*] Watertown! [*Glances around and then continues copying and reading.*] Seventeen—60B—21—3x—naught—47R—9—naught, “await orders.” [*Looks up at audience.*] And no signature. [*Carefully replaces telegram in the envelope, seals it and puts it back on the table, takes card, crosses to stairs, turns, facing audience, pauses.*] I wonder who this Mr. Billy is. [*Meditates.*] Can he be ——? [*Pause.*] I wonder.

[*Exit up stairs slowly and out rear R.*]

MRS. GRAY.

[*Speaking outside at rear L.*] Bring him right into the house.

[*Enter from c. e. from rear L., followed by*
BUB.

BUB.

I wonder how old Ishmael happened to be ridin' in a air-ship. He's a hermit who lives way up the mountain. He never comes to town and I'll bet he never saw a train of cars in all his hull life.

MRS. GRAY.

Tell Kittie to put on some hot water and bring my first-aid kit to Room 3.

BUB.

[*Making no move to obey.*] Yes'm. What do you suppose they was doin' up in a air-ship?

MRS. GRAY.

Never mind. Hurry up!

BUB.

[*Hurrying to door at L.*] Yes'm, I'm a-hurryin'.
[*Exit, L.*]

BILLY.

[*Speaking outside at rear L.*] Careful, careful! Don't jar his head. [*Pause.*] Easy, there. That's right.

[*MRS. GRAY crosses to C. E. Enter from C. E. BORDEN and BILLY, supporting ISHMAEL, who has his arms around their necks. ISHMAEL'S eyes are closed and he appears very feeble. NANCY and AGGIE enter quietly and stand at C. E.*]

MRS. GRAY.

[*Crossing to door, R.*] Bring him in here.

[*Exit, R. BORDEN and BILLY lead ISHMAEL off at R. very slowly.*]

AGGIE.

[*Suppressed excitement.*] Oh, Nancy, is it the hermit?

NANCY.

Yes, that's what they said.

AGGIE.

Will he die?

NANCY.

I don't know. He's fainted, I guess.

AGGIE.

I wonder if they'd let me in to see him.

NANCY.

Certainly not.

AGGIE.

I never saw him before and I'm just crazy to get a good look at him.

NANCY.

Well, you can't. Maybe he's dying.

AGGIE.

Oh, I'd just love to see him. All the girls at school down in Skeehawken say some lady broke his heart years and years ago. Lizzie Carter saw him once in the woods, and it almost scared her to death. And he was just as frightened as she was. He ran one way and she the other. [*Crosses to R.*] I'm going in. They can't do no more than fire me out.

NANCY.

[*Takes her by the arm and leads her to C. E.*]
You are not. There are too many in there already.
You come right up-stairs to your room.

AGGIE.

[*Whines.*] I ain' goin' to. I wanna see him,
and I wanna see the air-ship man. Lemme go in.
I wanna see the hermit.

NANCY.

Keep still. If he saw you it would make him
worse. He'd have a relapse right away.

[*Leads her out at rear R. and up stairs. En-
ter BUB from L., carrying a kettle of water.*]

BUB.

Here's the water. [*Hurrying to R., spills some.*]
Gosh! Wow, that's hot. Like to scalded the skin
clean off'n my fool hand. Hotter'n old Jim Crow.
[*Enter MRS. GRAY from R.*]

MRS. GRAY.

Take the water in, Bub.

BUB.

[*At door, R.*] Yes'm. Is he dead yit?

MRS. GRAY.

No. He's still in a faint. I think it's exhaus-
tion.

BUB.

Exhaustion? Gee, that must be awful.

[*Exit, R. Enter MARY from L.*]

MARY.

The boy said there had been an accident. Can I help you?

MRS. GRAY.

A man was flying up the mountain in an aeroplane. He saw an old man crossing a bridge. The old man was evidently exhausted and fell into the river. The aeronaut got him out and brought him here.

MARY.

[Crosses to door at R.] Maybe I can help them.

MRS. GRAY.

He seems in a sort of a daze.

MARY.

[Opens door at R. and looks in; starts back with an exclamation.] Oh!

MRS. GRAY.

What is it?

MARY.

It's Mr. Billy.

MRS. GRAY.

It is?

MARY.

Yes, the man I knew in the French hospital.

[Comes down c. to MRS. GRAY.]

MRS. GRAY.

Don't you want to go in and see him?

MARY.

Not now, please. I'm not very well. I'll see him this afternoon.

MRS. GRAY.

I didn't expect him until to-morrow. And to think he came in an air-ship. [*Crosses to door at R.*

MARY.

The man I knew in France. I can hardly realize it.

MRS. GRAY.

There's nothing like meeting old friends. He's awful good looking, isn't he?

MARY.

Yes.

MRS. GRAY.

Well, I hope you'll feel better. You haven't been well since you came back from Watertown.

[*Enter MISS MATCH down stairs; she comes in C. E. from up R.*

MISS MATCH.

Who was the man they carried in?

MRS. GRAY.

An old hermit who fainted from exhaustion.

MISS MATCH.

A hermit? Isn't that romantic?

[*Looks at MARY.*

MRS. GRAY.

Oh, you haven't met Miss Blake, have you? Miss Match, Miss Blake, the new housekeeper.

[Ladies bow formally, MISS MATCH at c., MARY down L.] Now you must excuse me. I have to look after the patient.

[Exit at r. As soon as MRS. GRAY makes her exit MISS MATCH crosses down to MARY and stands looking at her in a domineering manner. Soft music: Chorus of "Long, Long Trail." MARY is distressed.]

MISS MATCH.

[Coldly, in her natural voice; all traces of her "old maid" manner are now laid aside.] You were crying all night. Haven't you any control of yourself at all?

MARY.

Oh, don't, don't! Why did you come here? Why couldn't you leave me in peace?

[Crosses to chair at L. and sits.]

MISS MATCH.

Where else could I go? I thought we would be safe here in this out-of-the-way place. Mrs. Gray is your friend and if the worst comes to the worst you can count on her.

MARY.

We mustn't be seen together. Don't you realize how dangerous it is?

MISS MATCH.

It is more dangerous than you think. Pull yourself together; we have work to do. We'll probably have to leave to-night.

MARY.

Leave? Why?

MISS MATCH.

Because it isn't safe here. They're after us.

MARY.

I can't do it. I won't do it. I'm not afraid, I have been a coward too long. Now I'm going to show my hand. [*Rises and faces MISS MATCH bravely.*] I intend to stay here and if there is any danger I'll meet it face to face.

MISS MATCH.

You can't.

MARY.

I can. Do you think I'm going back to the old life? Until I went to France I never knew a moment's peace. Over there I found out the true meaning of life; my past was blotted out and I made a fresh start. There was a man over there who asked me to be his wife. He is here to-day.

MISS MATCH.

[*Startled.*] Here?

MARY.

He just came.

MISS MATCH.

But you can't marry him.

MARY.

Why can't I? Why should I be hounded all my life by bitter memories of the past? I tell you I made a fresh start. I'm going straight.

MISS MATCH.

[*Sneers.*] Straight? Getaway Bell going straight? That would be welcome news down at the police headquarters, wouldn't it? Welcome news! The reformation of Getaway Bell! It would look well in print.

MARY.

[*Sinks in chair and buries her face in her hands.*]
Oh, don't, don't!

MISS MATCH.

[*Bending over her, speaking in a subdued but perfectly audible voice, malignancy in every tone.*]
Do you suppose the men at headquarters will let you go straight? Do you suppose that they will give up the chase after that Watertown haul? You think you can live down your past, do you? Well, you can't. No matter where you are, no matter *what* you are—every day, every hour you'll be hounded by the fear that they are after you. You'll shrink from every stranger in the street, you'll suspect every one you meet. You may hide from the gang, you may hide from the police, but you can't hide from yourself.

MARY.

What do you want me to do?

MISS MATCH.

Nothing, at present. I am waiting for news from Croak. [*Crosses to table and picks up telegram.*] You see this message.

[*Play the next scene rapidly until MISS MATCH exits.*]

MARY.

[*Follows her.*] A telegram for Mr. Billy. That's the man.

MISS MATCH.

What man?

MARY.

The man I knew in France.

MISS MATCH.

The man who wanted to marry you?

MARY.

Yes.

MISS MATCH.

And do you know who he is? Do you know what he is? He is the man who's after us, the plain clothes man from headquarters.

MARY.

It isn't true.

MISS MATCH.

It is true. I read that message. It's written in code, all but three words. "Await orders" and "Watertown."

MARY.

[*Starts.*] Watertown?

MISS MATCH.

[*Crosses to stairs up R.*] That message is from the New York police. [*Exit, up stairs.*]

MARY.

[*Standing by table, facing front, horror and agony depicted on face; pause long enough to count twenty.*] A plain clothes man from headquarters. [*Sinks in chair by table, buries face in arms on table, sobbing.*] It's all over. My dream is over, my dream is over! [Sobs.]

SLOW CURTAIN,

ACT II

SCENE.—*The same setting as Act I, but it is now 8 P. M. and the lights on the stage are lit. Strong firelight effect from the fireplace down L.*

NANCY is discovered at the rise of the curtain seated at the piano playing. BORDEN is reading a newspaper at center table. NANCY finishes her piano selection as the curtain rises.

BORDEN.

Where's Aggie?

NANCY.

Up in my room reading. She found an old book of fairy tales in the library and Mrs. Gray loaned it to her.

BORDEN.

I hope she'll be able to keep out of mischief for once in her life.

NANCY.

Don't worry so much about your sisters, Romeo. I think we can take care of ourselves.

BORDEN.

I'm afraid Aggie will say something about that Liberty Bond.

NANCY.

I don't think she will. She's old enough to know that it is important to keep still. Have you come to any conclusion yet?

BORDEN.

No, I can't imagine where it came from. If it dropped from one of the up-stairs windows it is almost certain that the thief is here in the Inn.

NANCY.

Surely you don't suspect Miss Blake.

BORDEN.

I don't suspect any one yet. I haven't made up my mind. I think I'd better go down to New York and turn the clue over to the police department.

NANCY.

Why not go to Watertown?

BORDEN.

The paper said that the bank had placed the case in the hands of the Ryan Detective Agency of New York.

NANCY.

I'm sure Miss Blake isn't a thief.

BORDEN.

Why?

NANCY.

I hardly know. Intuition, I guess. She has such a sad, sweet face. I think she's a regular darling. You don't think that bond came from her room, do you?

BORDEN.

No, I don't think it did. But it certainly came from somewhere.

NANCY.

Miss Blake is an angel.

BORDEN.

She seemed a little cold to me.

NANCY.

Angels generally do; it's the other kind that are warm.

[Crosses to table, takes up pink knitting and sits R. of center table knitting.]

BORDEN.

But she is so distant. She hardly noticed me at dinner.

NANCY.

What did you expect her to do? Fall on your neck and kiss you?

BORDEN.

Well, considering the fact that we've been regular patrons of the Silver Trout Inn for the past five years she might be a little more demonstrative.

NANCY.

What's become of Mr. Greener?

BORDEN.

Mrs. Gray said that he was spending the day in the village. He's a travelling salesman, you know.

NANCY.

Is he good looking?

BORDEN.

Oh, rather. But he's awfully young. Haven't you met him yet?

NANCY.

I haven't even seen him.

ISHMAEL.

[*Off stage at R.*] Oh, I'm falling! I'm falling. The water. Don't let me drown. Oh, oh!

[*His voice dies away.*]

NANCY.

That poor old man. I don't believe he'll get over that fall.

BORDEN.

The doctor said he'll gain consciousness to-night. The crisis has passed.

NANCY.

Wasn't it lucky that the air-ship man flew by just as he tumbled into the river?

BORDEN.

Yes. He's promised to take me up in the aeroplane to-morrow if the hermit is better.

NANCY.

I'm just dying to meet him. I think he is awfully good looking. He's got such a nice nose.

BORDEN.

The hermit?

NANCY.

Don't be a goose. Mrs. Gray expects several other guests to-morrow. A Mrs. Morann and her two daughters are coming from Rochester.

BORDEN.

That's good. Two or three live young women would waken up the place.

NANCY.

I've never been accused of being a dead one before.

BORDEN.

Oh, you're my sister.

NANCY.

And then there's Miss Match. She's demonstrative enough. How do you like her?

BORDEN.

About two thousand miles distant.

NANCY.

She seems quite taken with you.

BORDEN.

When a woman reaches her age and is still in the market she is apt to be taken with every man she sees. Who is she anyhow?

NANCY.

A wealthy maiden lady from some place in Ohio. She's to be here a month, at least. Funny old thing, isn't she? She treats that cat like it was a million dollar baby.

BORDEN.

I can't see why Miss Blake allows cats in the house. I hate 'em.

NANCY.

Kittie says she pays regular board for it.

BORDEN.

Kittie?

NANCY.

Yes, haven't you met Kittie?

BORDEN.

I don't think so. Is she one of the guests?

NANCY.

No, she's Mrs. Gray's maid, but she's awfully interesting.

BORDEN.

Good looking?

NANCY.

A dream. She's a brunette with black snappy eyes and dark, curly hair.

BORDEN.

Yes? I'm rather partial to brunettes.

NANCY.

Then you'll be partial to her. She's a most decided brunette.

[Enter AGGIE down stairs entering c. e. from rear R.]

AGGIE.

Say, can I go fishing in the creek to-morrow? I got a whole can of fish-worms hid under the lounge.

NANCY.

Fishing? Certainly not. You're getting too old to be such a tomboy.

AGGIE.

If I ever want to do anything I'm always too old, or too young. I wonder if I'll ever be just the right age.

NANCY.

I'm afraid it will be too cold for you to go fishing to-morrow.

AGGIE.

Aw, gee, a girl never gets a chance at nothing. I wisht I was a boy, then I wouldn't care whether I went fishin' or not. It's awful tough bein' born a girl.

NANCY.

Why don't you run along up-stairs and finish that nice book of fairy stories?

AGGIE.

Aw, say, that book's too tame. No murders ner detectives ner Indians ner nothin'. Just fairies. Huh, I'd rather read about vamps. Well, anyhow, Mr. Greener's promised to take me riding in his flivver to-morrow.

NANCY.

I thought you wanted to fish.

AGGIE.

Well, there are different things to fish for, ain't there? I'm going to fish for a beau!

BORDEN.

Aggie, I'm astonished.

NANCY.

Aren't you rather young for that, Aggie?

AGGIE.

Nope. It's a *young* beau I'm fishing for. When I see how scarce the men are nowadays and old maids like Miss Match running around loose, it makes me think that a girl is never too young to start something. And, believe me, I'm going to start something.

BORDEN.

You'd better start to bed.

AGGIE.

Now don't be cross, Romeo. Kittie said you were such a nice looking man.

BORDEN.

Kittie?

AGGIE.

Sure. The maid. She peeked in when you were at dinner. She says she knows a fine looking man when she sees him, 'cause she's been married three times.

BORDEN.

Is that so?

AGGIE.

[*Goes to steps, turns to BORDEN.*] Yes, and in July she's going to celebrate the fourth.

BORDEN.

The fourth?

AGGIE.

Sure. The Fourth of July.
[*Laughs childishly and sits on steps.*]

BORDEN.

I think I'll have to have a look at Kittie.

NANCY.

She's worth looking at. Are you going to flirt with her?

BORDEN.

Oh, I didn't mean that. Maybe that mysterious Liberty Bond came from her room.

NANCY.

Her room is on the other side of the building.

BORDEN.

At any rate it will do no harm to see her.

NANCY.

Oh, you're an awful flirt, Romeo. Now you want to meet Kittie.

BORDEN.

[*Coughs.*] I believe I'm catching cold. Maybe she could make me a mint julep. I suppose she is in the kitchen.

[*Starts toward L. Enter MRS. GRAY from L.*]

NANCY.

Oh, Mrs. Gray, how is the hermit?

MRS. GRAY.

He was sleeping when I left about an hour ago.
I was just going in again.

BORDEN.

[*Coughs.*] I believe I have a cold.

NANCY.

And he wants to see Kittie.

MRS. GRAY.

To see Kittie? What for?

BORDEN.

I thought she might be able to fix something for me.

AGGIE.

Oh, she will. Kittie's the best little fixer on the mountain.

NANCY.

My brother is awfully partial to brunettes.

MRS. GRAY.

[*Near L. door.*] I'll call her.

BORDEN.

[*At L. c.*] Thank you. I don't like to bother you.

MRS. GRAY.

Oh, we like to please our guests. [*Looks off L. and calls.*] Kittie!

KITTIE.

[*Outside at L.*] Ma'am?

MRS. GRAY.

Come here a moment.

NANCY.

[*Up R. of BORDEN, who has crossed to c.*] Wait till you see her, buddy

KITTIE.

[*Outside L.*] Yas'm, I'm coming.

BORDEN.

[*To NANCY.*] What a sweet voice.

MRS. GRAY.

Here she is.

[*KITTIE appears in doorway at L.*

KITTIE.

You want me?

MRS. GRAY.

[*Crosses down L.*] Mr. Borden wants to speak to you.

BORDEN.

[*Astounded.*] Good Lord!

KITTIE.

[*Goes to BORDEN.*] Yassir, here I am.

BORDEN.

I—er— [*rattled*] that is—er—I—

NANCY.

Go on.

AGGIE.

Shoot ahead, you're doing fine.

BORDEN.

I just wanted to know if I could [*sneezes*]*—*that is, if you could *—* [*Sneezes.*]

KITTIE.

If I could? [*Sneezes loudly.*] Yassir, I reckon I could. [*Crosses down to* MRS. GRAY.] Say, Mis' Mabel, wha's de matter wif dat man? He don' ac' right in de haid to me. Callin' me in yere to ax me kin I *—* [*Sneezes loudly.*]

BORDEN.

[*Coming down c.*] I'm catching cold. Could you give me a little*—*that is, could you make me a mint julep?

KITTIE.

'Deed and I dunno. Does you 'low a mint julep, Mis' Mabel?

MRS. GRAY.

[*Hesitates.*] Well, I'm not sure.

BORDEN.

It's to ward off a cold. [*Sneezes.*] I'm always troubled with a cold when the weather is bad.

MRS. GRAY.

Oh, if you ain't well *—*

KITTIE.

Dat man wants a good dose ob salts, pine-tar and vinegar. Dat's a heap better'n mint julep. Boss, I fix you up a description dat's warranted to kill or cure. Jes' leave it to me. I knows how to cure a cold, yassir, I shore does.

BORDEN.

[*Gives her a silver quarter.*] I think a mint julep will be sufficient, Kittie. Go easy on the mint and strong on the julep. Make it a regular stick of julep.

[*MRS. GRAY, who has crossed to L. at rear, now exits at L., quietly.*]

KITTIE.

Man, I'll make it a log ob wood. My second husband, de late Mistah Ephraim Doosy, used to be troubled jes' dataway like you is, and I reckon I knows jes' what kind ob a stick you wants. Leave it to me, boss. Dis yere cullud lady is from old Kentucky, she is—and she shore knows a stick when she sees it. [*Laughs.*] Dem sticks am mighty salubrious in dis kind o' weather. [*Crosses to door at L.*] Yassir, boss, mighty salubrious, mighty salubrious. [*Exit, L.*]

BORDEN.

So that's Kittie, is it?

NANCY.

[*Laughs.*] That's Kittie. She's a decided brunette, dark curly hair, clear complexon and fast color warranted not to bleach, crock nor run.

AGGIE.

Yeah, how do you like her, buddy?

BORDEN.

It's time you were in bed, young lady.

AGGIE.

Oh, I can't stay cooped up there all day and night like a hen with the mumps. I gotta get the air once in a while and it's too early for bed. You treat me like I was a kid.

NANCY.

Aren't you?

AGGIE.

Not so you can notice it. I'm a young lady, I am. And if you don't let me go fishing to-morrow morning I'll tell something you don't want me to tell.

BORDEN.

Aggie! Why on earth do you want to go fishing?

AGGIE.

Well, there aren't any men to speak of up here at the Inn, so I'm going down to fish and see what I can catch. [*At steps.*] Get me, Steve?

[*Exit up stairs and off at rear R.*]

BORDEN.

I'll have to have a talk with her.

NANCY.

I think you had better turn that bond over to the police.

BORDEN.

Maybe that would be best. I'll send a telegram to the New York agency to-night.

NANCY.

And in the meantime we'd better see if we can't keep Aggie quiet. [*At steps.*]

BORDEN.

Yes. She talks entirely too much. [*Crossing to NANCY.*] I've been worried ever since she found that note. I'll turn the whole thing over to the detectives.

[*Exit up stairs with NANCY and off at rear R. Enter MARY from L. She crosses to table and arranges the books and papers. MRS. GRAY enters from R. and comes down to her.*]

MRS. GRAY.

He's sleeping easily now.

MARY.

Mrs. Gray, what is the real reason for Mr. Billy's visit here?

MRS. GRAY.

[*Startled.*] The real reason? Why do you think he is here?

MARY.

I don't know. I can't make it out. I want to know. It means a lot to me, Mrs. Gray. He's not here simply as a guest at the Inn, is he?

MRS. GRAY.

Well, no he ain't.

MARY.

And that other man, the old hermit?

[Seated L. of center table.]

MRS. GRAY.

I never seen him before in my life. He's awful queer. It gives him a spell to have women in the room. If he has a rational moment and sees a woman he screams like a maniac.

[Seated right of center table. Enter BUB from R. with kettle.]

BUB.

He wants some more hot water.

MRS. GRAY.

Kittie will get it for you. He's resting easy now, ain't he?

BUB.

I dunno. He jest lays there all quiet like he was dead er sump'm, and then all of a sudden he lets out a yell that skeers me clean outa my socks. I never seen nothin' like it. I give Mr. Billy his telygram.

MARY.

What did he say?

BUB.

He said, "All right," and gimme a nickel. And he's all right. I knowed jest as soon as I talked to him that he wasn't a crook.

MARY.

A crook? Did you think he was a crook?

BUB.

Wall, when I saw that telygram writ in code and addressed to a man named Billy fer a last name it jest naturally made me suspicious of sump'm. But he's all right. He's a reg'lar humdinger when it comes to nursin'.

MARY.

Is there anything we can do?

BUB.

No'm, not a thing. Mr. Billy's doin' it all. Ish-mael don't need no women folks. [*Turns at L. entrance toward MARY.*] All he needs is some hot water. [*Exit, L.*]

MRS. GRAY.

Ain't it strange that he should turn out to be the man you knew in France?

MARY.

Yes. That's why I wondered why he came here.

MRS. GRAY.

He's a sort of a private detective, or something like that. [*MARY starts.*] He's from Colorado and my lawyers sent him here. His uncle used to be a friend of my husband.

MARY.

But what is he doing here?

MRS. GRAY.

I'm going to hire him.

MARY.

What for?

MRS. GRAY.

To find my husband.

MARY.

Find him? Why, I always thought you were a widow.

MRS. GRAY.

Yes, every one thinks that. No, Mary, my husband still lives—at least, I hope so. But I haven't seen him for twenty-two years. He—*[hesitates, registering misery]* he—ran away. *[Enter BUB from L. carrying kettle carefully. He crosses to R.]* Bub, ask Mr. Billy if he can come here for a few minutes. Tell him an old friend of his is here. Just as soon as he can leave his patient.

BUB.

Yes'm.

[Exit, R.]

MRS. GRAY.

My lawyers in Denver have the highest regard for Mr. Billy. They think if any one can find my husband he can. It's a long story, Mary. For twenty-two years I've borne my burden in silence, hoping—praying for the day when I shall see him again, when I can kneel at his feet and ask forgiveness for one act of folly that separated us years ago.

MARY.

You say he ran away?

MRS. GRAY.

Yes. It was this way. My folks had been poor miners out in Colorado and I never had much education or anything that makes life happy to a girl. John was a teacher in the high school and we met and liked each other. He got into some trouble with the faculty on account of his socialistic ideas and we decided to get married at once and move into the mountains. We had two years of heaven on earth, me and John, out there in the mountains together. My people were just beginning to make the mine pay and I was anxious to bring them and John together, but he was proud and he quarreled with my father. John was a college man and I never had any education to speak of, so I decided to study at night and try to make myself worthy of him. My father made a big strike in the mine and was a wealthy man, but John refused to let me see him. That wasn't right, was it?

MARY.

Why was he so opposed to your father?

MRS. GRAY.

Oh, one little thing led to another. They just couldn't agree. John was a socialist and father wanted him to bring me into the city and live like other folks. He offered us a fine home and everything, but John laughed in his face. Of course that led to hard words and John forbid me ever seeing my father again. Then he took sick, and we were all alone in the mountains. He had a fever and

often was delirious. I wanted to take him to the hospital in town, but he wouldn't even allow me to send for a doctor. I didn't know what to do. At last he got so bad that I rode for help and took him to the hospital in spite of his orders. That was right, wasn't it?

MARY.

Of course it was.

MRS. GRAY.

But it only made matters worse. John kept worrying about his expenses. We didn't have any money and I didn't know what to do. There was the doctors to pay and the nurses and the hospital bill. John was worse and I became desperate. I appealed to my father. He was glad enough to help me and I thought everything was going to be all right, but when I got back to the hospital John had disappeared.

MARY.

Disappeared?

MRS. GRAY.

He escaped from the nurses when they thought he was sleeping. He left a letter for me, a bitter, bitter letter, saying that I had deserted him in his trouble and that he never wanted to see me again. We searched everywhere but never found any clue. Shortly after that my father died and I was rich—rich, but it was too late. My husband had disappeared and my life's happiness was over. I have never seen him since, not a letter—not a trace in all these years—and I loved him more than my life.
[Sobs.]

MARY.

Have you tried the secret service?

MRS. GRAY.

I've tried everything. For twenty-two years the detectives have been looking in every part of the country. That is why I went into service in France; that is why I am here in the Adirondack Mountains. I want to be where I can search for him, where I can see as many men as possible—hoping—praying that I am not too late.

[Enter BUB from R.]

BUB.

The hermit's woke up and Mr. Billy says to tell you he can't leave him right away. He thinks he orter have some milk, er soup, er sump'm. Told me to heat him some milk and I told him we didn't have none—and we ain't. Then he spoke up real sassy and told me to git it anyhow. Wonder what he thinks I am—a cow, er sump'm?

MRS. GRAY.

Tell Kittie to make him some beef broth.

MARY.

There is a jar of beef extract in the refrigerator.

BUB.

[At L. door.] Yes'm.

[Exit, L.]

MARY.

And Mr. Billy is trying to help you find your husband?

MRS. GRAY.

Yes. His uncle used to be an old friend of John's in Denver. About three months ago in looking over his uncle's papers he found an old letter of John's, written long before we were married, and telling of the beautiful views and good hunting in this part of the Adirondack Mountains. My lawyers thought it might be a clue and cabled to me. I came home as soon as I could and bought this place and they sent Mr. Billy to help me.

MARY.

That old man in there—do you suppose it is possible that he is your husband?

MRS. GRAY.

The hermit? Oh, no. He must be over eighty years old and John isn't fifty-five yet. Mr. Billy's meeting with the hermit was all an accident.

[*Enter KITTIE from L., carrying glass of julep on tray.*]

MARY.

Kittie, did you make the broth for the sick man?

KITTIE.

Yes'm, Miss Mary, it's done made. I gotta take dis yere mint julep up to dat Mr. Borden. He say put a stick in it. [*Laughs.*] Lawsy, I hopes he'll like dat old stick. It's strong enough to make a baby mouse fly at a hungry cat. [*Smells it.*] Ummm! Happy remembrance, happy remembrance!

MRS. GRAY.

You'll find Mr. Borden up in his room.

KITTIE.

[*Crossing to rear R.*] Yes'm. I certainly hope I's got dis yere mint julep strong enough for him.

MRS. GRAY.

It mustn't be too strong, Kittie.

KITTIE.

[*At foot of steps.*] No'm, it hain't, 'ceptin' ef he takes three glasses ob dis yere concoction he won't keer whether he's got de influenzy er *not!*

[*Exit, C. E. and up stairs. Enter BUB from L., carrying a bowl and napkin.*

BUB.

They're makin' a reg'lar strained nurse outa me. [*Crossing to R.*] I orter wear a red cross on my sleeve, er sump'm. [*Exit, R.*

MARY.

Did Mr. Billy get his telegram?

[*MISS MATCH appears at foot of stairs unobserved.*

MRS. GRAY.

Yes. The boy said it was written in code, and Mr. Billy seemed right worried when he read it. He asked me all kinds of questions about it, when it came and who brought it and where I'd laid it and if any one had read it. He's awful suspicious. [*Sees MISS MATCH.*] Oh!

MISS MATCH.

[*In her old maid manner.*] How is the sick man? I was so nervous up-stairs that I couldn't go to bed until I learned how he was.

MRS. GRAY.

He's better, I think.

MISS MATCH.

Oh, I'm so glad. I just *had* to come down and see if I could do anything for him. [*Slight pause.*] I want to meet the aviator, too. I'm just crazy about aviators.

MRS. GRAY.

I don't think Mr. Billy will meet any one to-night.

MISS MATCH.

Of course not, it's too late. But I'm so anxious to meet him in the morning.

MRS. GRAY.

I'll introduce him.

MISS MATCH:

Is he a friend of yours?

MRS. GRAY:

No, but I know his family.

MISS MATCH:

What business is he in?

MRS. GRAY.

I'm not certain. His uncle was in the wholesale paper business.

MISS MATCH.

Well, if there isn't anything I can do for that poor old man I think I'll go to bed. My nerves have been awfully upset. Good-night.

MRS. GRAY.

Good-night.

MISS MATCH.

Good-night, Miss Blake.

MARY.

[*Bows and murmurs.*] Good-night.

MISS MATCH.

Are you feeling better?

MARY.

Better?

MISS MATCH.

Yes. I heard you crying last night, you know.

MARY.

Oh, yes. I'm much better now, thank you.

MISS MATCH.

A little cry is the best thing in the world for a nervous woman, isn't it? Well, good-night!

[*Exit up stairs and off rear R.*]

MRS. GRAY.

Funny woman, isn't she?

MARY.

Peculiar.

[*Enter BUB from R.*]

BUB.

The old man's had his supper and gone to sleep. Mr. Billy wants to see you a minute, if he kin.

MRS. GRAY.

Certainly.

BUB.

[*At door, R., yells to some one off stage.*] She says you kin. [*Crosses to stairs.*] Say, Mis' Gray, ef you don't need me no more I think I'll go to bed.

MRS. GRAY.

All right. I think your room is all ready.

BUB.

Aw, I kin fix it, if it ain't. I'm a dandy chambermaid. You orter see me sweep the dirt under the bed and everything. [*Exit up stairs at rear R.*]

MARY.

[*Goes to L.*] I'll see that everything is locked up in the rear of the house.

MRS. GRAY.

Don't you want to meet your old friend, Mary?

MARY.

Not to-night, please. I'm not feeling quite myself. I'll see Mr. Billy to-morrow. [*Exit, at L.*]

MRS. GRAY.

Something is worrying Mary. I can't quite make it out. [*Enter BILLY from R.*]

BILLY.

[*Crosses down to MRS. GRAY and shakes hands with her.*] In the first place I want to thank you for letting me bring the old man here. He might

have died if we hadn't reached your place just when we did.

MRS. GRAY.

Was he sick?

BILLY.

He was half dead from starvation and exhaustion. I saw him faint as he was passing over a bridge. I flew by just as he fell into the water. Do you know him?

MRS. GRAY.

[*Seated at center table.*] No. Some one said he was an old hermit who lives up in the mountains. I don't know many people about here yet.

BILLY.

He'll be all right in the morning. The crisis has passed and he's resting quietly now.

[*Sits at center table.*]

MRS. GRAY.

I didn't expect you until to-morrow.

BILLY.

I had my aeroplane and I thought I'd gain a little time by using it.

[*Enter KITTIE down stairs.*]

KITTIE.

[*Crossing to door at L.*] Mistah Borden say he's gotta go down to the village to-night.

MRS. GRAY.

To-night? Why, it's awfully late now.

KITTIE.

He say he gotta send a telygram, and ef you're gwine to lock up early he wants to know kin he hab de front door key.

MRS. GRAY.

I'll wait till he comes down.

KITTIE.

Yes'm. Say, Mis' Mabel, he shore did do justice to dat mint julep. He swallowed it, julep, mint, ice and all. I declare I like to thought he gwine to swallow de tumbler, too. Dat man's shore got a capacity for mint juleps, he shore has.

[Exit, L., still talking.]

BILLY.

I wouldn't mind trying one of her mint juleps myself.

MRS. GRAY.

Of course. Shall I have her make you one now?

BILLY.

No, thank you. I'll wait till to-morrow. I expect to be up most of the night with Old Ishmael.

MRS. GRAY.

Is there any danger?

BILLY.

Not in the least. He might want something, that's all. *[Looks around.]* Cosy place you have here, Mrs. Gray.

MRS. GRAY.

Isn't it? I met a young girl in France—a nurse—who interested me. She wanted something to do here at home, so I bought this Inn and put her in charge as housekeeper.

BILLY.

A French nurse, eh?

MRS. GRAY.

Oh, no, she's an American.

BILLY.

Oh!

MRS. GRAY.

And my lawyers thought we might get some news of John here in the Adirondacks. He wrote a letter to your uncle years ago saying what a grand place this was.

BILLY.

Yes, I know. I hope we may be able to get some clue up here. Our man in Nevada and our men in New Mexico have been on false scents.

[Takes small note-book from pocket and looks at it.]

MRS. GRAY.

He spoke of the mountains in New York in his letter. Maybe he has been here all these years.

BILLY.

[Referring to note-book.] Let me see. He is fifty-four years old, has dark eyes and erect carriage. Rather slender. Hair brown. Probably

gray now. No distinguishing marks or scars. Fond of outdoor life, hunting, fishing and trapping. Loved solitude. Hated society and railed against the idle rich. Liked to be alone in the woods. [*Slight pause; he looks at her.*] Something of a hermit, eh? [*Pronounce "eh" like hay.*]

MRS. GRAY.

Yes. [*Pause.*] You don't think that he —
[*Motions toward door at R.*]

BILLY.

Oh, no—not at all. Ishmael must be about eighty. And Mr. Gray was a man of education and refinement, wasn't he?

MRS. GRAY.

Yes. He was a Cornell man.

BILLY.

My friend in there murders the king's English every time he opens his mouth. Still he's lived in the mountains for years. Maybe he can give us some valuable information. Can't you think of any other mark or trait that might help identify your husband?

MRS. GRAY.

No, I'm afraid I can't. [*Thinks.*] Let me see. He was very fond of Walt Whitman's poems. [*BILLY makes notes.*] He hated artificial flies in fishing, and he loved to camp out. It was a regular passion with him. He never slept in a bed. He used to wrap a blanket around him and sleep before the fire, but he always slept in the open if possible.
[*Plant this speech in minds of audience.*]

BILLY.

Anything else? These little items may be very important, you know.

MRS. GRAY.

He was very fond of good books, but he cared little for music and nothing at all for art. I used to paint studies of the mountain landscape in a blank book I had but he tore it up and used it for shaving-paper. Probably the thing that would help you the most was his hatred of wealth and everything it could buy.

BILLY.

That's important.

MRS. GRAY.

Can you give me any hope? I have waited so long—have been disappointed so much following blind clues—but I'll not give up. As long as I have a penny, as long as I live—I'll keep up the search.

BILLY.

What was the nature of his illness when he disappeared?

MRS. GRAY.

He was just getting over a severe attack of typhoid fever.

BILLY.

Never had any mental or nervous trouble, did he?

MRS. GRAY.

I don't think so.

BILLY.

Just another question. Have you ever heard of Watertown, New York?

MRS. GRAY.

Yes, why?

BILLY.

Oh, nothing to do with your husband. I have been offered a job over there, but of course I will do all I can to help you first.

MRS. GRAY.

My housekeeper once lived in Watertown.

BILLY.

[Shows much interest.] She did?

MRS. GRAY.

Yes. She has been visiting there ever since she returned from France. She came here only yesterday.

BILLY.

How long was she in Watertown?

MRS. GRAY.

I'm not quite sure. A month, at least. She was staying with friends.

BILLY.

[Quickly.] Who were they?

[MARY is heard off stage at L. singing the chorus of "Long, Long Trail" softly.]

MRS. GRAY.

I don't remember.

BILLY.

Didn't you write to her while she was there?

MRS. GRAY.

Yes, but I addressed the letters to the general delivery.

BILLY.

Listen!

MRS. GRAY.

What is it?

[MARY *sings a little louder.*]

BILLY.

Some one is singing. [*Rises.*] It sounds like a voice I used to hear in France. The song is the same, too.

MRS. GRAY.

Yes. Mary used to sing it in France.

BILLY.

Mary? Mary Blake?

MRS. GRAY.

Yes. She's my housekeeper. She said she knew you.

BILLY.

Mary Blake your housekeeper?

MRS. GRAY.

Yes. She was your nurse near Château-Thierry.

BILLY.

And [*hesitates*—she is the girl who has been spending the month in Watertown?

MRS. GRAY.

Yes. She said she'd see you to-morrow. She hasn't been well since she came here.

BILLY.

Pardon me.

[*Takes telegram from his pocket and studies it.*

MRS. GRAY.

Shall I show you to your room?

[*The singing ends softly.*

BILLY.

I think I'll stay in there. [*Motions toward R.*] The old man said he wanted to be alone, but he is sound asleep and won't know the difference.

MRS. GRAY.

Is there anything I can do for him?

BILLY.

Nothing, thank you.

[*Enter BORDEN from C. E., coming down stairs. He wears hat and coat.*

BORDEN.

I've got to go down to the village, Mrs. Gray. I think I can make it in an hour.

MRS. GRAY.

I'll get you the key.

BILLY.

It isn't necessary. I'll be in here.

BORDEN.

I hate to trouble you, but it's a very important message I want to get off to-night. The telegraph office is open until midnight and my flivver generally makes good time.

MRS. GRAY.

Good-night.

BORDEN.

[*In c. e.*] Good-night.

[*Exit, c. e. to l. rear. Enter KITTIE from l.*]

KITTIE.

[*Crosses to rear r.*] Everything in de back's done locked up now, Miss Mabel, and Miss Mary's done gone to bed. She said tell you she's feelin' better.

MRS. GRAY.

Oh, I'm glad of that. This has been a strenuous day, hasn't it, Kittie?

KITTIE.

Shore has and dis yere cullud lady is cert'n'y glad to hit de hay. [*Gives a prodigious yawn.*] Lawsy, seems like I could sleep till old brother Gabriel blowed his trumpet on de day ob jubilee. [*At window.*] Mistah Borden's gittin' in his flivver. I wonder how come dat man's galivantin' down to de village dis time o' night. Well, ef dere hain't nuffin else I kin do fo' you, Miss Mabel, I reckon I'll

retire right now so's I kin git ma beauty sleep before midnight. [*Laughs.*] Beauty sleep! De Lawd knows I needs it. [*Exit, C. E. and up stairs.*]

MRS. GRAY.

[*To BILLY, who has been studying his telegram at center table.*] I think I'll go up-stairs, Mr. Billy, and make you a memorandum of all my husband's characteristics. It might be of some help to you. [*Crosses to piano.*]

BILLY.

[*Crosses and stands with his back to fireplace.*] Yes, especially his early life and associations. [*Looks at telegram which he holds in his hand; pauses.*] By the way, Mrs. Gray, do you know anything about Miss Blake's past life? Before you met her in France, I mean?

MRS. GRAY.

[*At window, arranging curtains for the night.*] Yes. [*Slight pause; she turns to him.*] But it was told me in confidence.

BILLY.

[*Down L.*] I understand. I hope you will pardon me, but I'm awfully interested in Miss Blake. She's a wonderful girl.

MRS. GRAY.

Indeed she is—and a good girl, too.

BILLY.

[*Looks at telegram, then at MRS. GRAY; there is a slight pause.*] Is she?

MRS. GRAY.

[*Positively.*] Yes, Mr. Billy, she is. She's a girl in a million.

BILLY.

I'm glad to hear you say so, Mrs. Gray. Awfully glad. [*Impulsively tears telegram into bits and throws it in the fireplace.*] That is my opinion exactly.

MRS. GRAY.

I wonder if Kittie locked the window. [*Looks out of the window. Suddenly she utters a sharp cry of fright.*] Oh!

BILLY.

[*Hurries to her.*] What is it?

MRS. GRAY.

[*Points out of window.*] I thought I saw some one lurking in the shadow of that tree.

BILLY.

Shh! Don't be alarmed.

MRS. GRAY.

I'm sure I saw something move.

BILLY.

I'll see who it is. [*Closes window, snaps out all lights on the stage.*] Wait a moment.

[*Crosses to C. E. stealthily and exits C. E., going out at rear L. There is a marked pause, long enough for one to count twenty. This is important and helps to keep up the*

suspense of the scene. The stage is almost dark, the only illumination coming from the fireplace. BILLY reënters at C. E.

MRS. GRAY.

Did you see any one?

BILLY.

No, it must have been the shadow of a moving tree.

MRS. GRAY.

I thought it was a man. I'm a little nervous, I guess, but I feel perfectly safe with you in the house. Lock the door when Mr. Borden comes in. [Crosses to stairs.] Good-night!

[Exit up the stairs.]

BILLY.

Good-night, Mrs. Gray. [Crosses to the window, opens it and looks out, hiding himself from any one outside. Slowly takes revolver from his pocket and examines it. He crosses down to the fireplace and examines the revolver carefully by the firelight. He shows his satisfaction. A sound is heard outside at R. BILLY should take plenty of time looking at the revolver—the stage has been perfectly quiet and the audience is “keyed” and alert. As soon as BILLY hears the sound off R. he straightens up and listens tensely. Crosses to C. E. with revolver pointed at door R. BILLY conceals himself at C. E. The door at R. slowly opens and ISHMAEL appears wearing a bathrobe and carrying two blankets. He looks about stage and is apparently satisfied that he is alone. He crosses to

window, opens it wide and extending his arms breathes in the air. BILLY appears watching him, visible to the audience but invisible to ISHMAEL. ISHMAEL slowly crosses down to fireplace, spreads a blanket in front of the fire, wraps the other one around himself and prepares to sleep. In the meantime BILLY has moved down back of the piano, watching ISHMAEL. Another pronounced pause, long enough to count fifteen. ISHMAEL sleeps. BILLY, slowly, watching ISHMAEL.] He never slept in a bed. He used to wrap a blanket around him and sleep before the fire. [Pause.] All right, John Gray, half of my work's done, anyway.

[Nods in approval, his eyes on ISHMAEL.]

SLOW CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE.—*The same as before. Time, seven o'clock the next morning.*

The rise of the curtain discovers the lights extinguished on the stage, but footlights, borders and heads on full. Strong bunch of yellows shine through the window. ISHMAEL is discovered asleep in front of the fireplace. After the curtain is up there is a slight pause and then a clock off stage strikes seven times. BILLY enters from R. briskly, crosses to ISHMAEL and shakes him.

BILLY.

Come, wake up, it's morning. [*Slight pause, shakes him again.*] It's time to get up. Breakfast is ready. [*Bawls.*] Get up!

ISHMAEL.

[*Slowly awakens, yawns, stretches, sits on floor and looks around. Pause as ISHMAEL rubs his eyes.*] Wall, I'll be swunked!

BILLY.

[*Standing L. C.*] You'll be worse than that if you don't hurry and get dressed. Do you want the ladies to find you looking like that?

ISHMAEL.

[*Rises hurriedly on word "ladies," crosses to BILLY and grasps his arm.*] Ladies? Is there ladies here? I ain't seen a lady in fifteen years. [*Looks around.*] Where in Sam Hill am I?

BILLY.

Silver Trout Inn, up the mountain from the village of Skeehawken, State of New York, U. S. A.

ISHMAEL.

[*Petulantly.*] Well, what am I doin' here? That's what I want to know. What am I a-doin' here, and who in Tunket air *you*?

BILLY.

Party by the name of Billy.

ISHMAEL.

Billy what?

BILLY.

[*Pleasantly.*] Just Billy. Plain Mr. Billy.

ISHMAEL.

[*Looks around puzzled.*] How'd I git here?

BILLY.

[*Nonchalantly.*] Flew.

ISHMAEL.

Flew? [*Pause.*] Say, what's the matter with you? Y' hain't crazy, er nothin', air y'? You don't act right to me. Flew! You hain't one of them lunytics, air y'?

BILLY.

I don't think so. I simply tried to answer your question. You came here in an aeroplane.

ISHMAEL.

Who did?

BILLY.

You did.

ISHMAEL.

In an aeroplane?

BILLY.

Yes.

ISHMAEL.

Shucks, there ain't no sich thing.

BILLY.

You remember falling into the river yesterday, don't you?

ISHMAEL.

[*Puts hand to head, speaks slowly as if trying to remember.*] Seems like I do. I went acrost that dratted ole bridge and I got dizzy and then ——

[*Pause.*]

BILLY.

Then you took a sudden little bath in the stream.

ISHMAEL.

[*Shivers.*] I remember. It was colder'n a icicle. I hate water worsen pizen. I tried to swim, but I was sun-struck, er sump'm, and couldn't move a

muscle. Cramps, I cal'late. I got my mouth full of water and my ears and my nose and my eyes. I never knowed there *was* so much water in that durned stream. "Water, water everywhere nor any drop to drink."—Coleridge.

BILLY.

Coleridge?

ISHMAEL.

[*Recovering his pose.*] Yep, he's a feller I used to know. I sunk clean down over my head and everything. I forgot everything I ever knew and was headed straight fer the promised land—then somebody grabbed me—and that's all I remember.

BILLY.

It was this way. I was flying up the mountains in an aeroplane and saw you fall in the river. I lighted as quick as I could and jumped in after you.

ISHMAEL.

And pulled me out?

BILLY.

Exactly.

ISHMAEL.

[*Shaking his hand warmly.*] You saved my life, young man. You saved my life.

BILLY.

Oh, that's nothing.

ISHMAEL.

Nothing? It was the act of a hero. [*Changes tone to uneducated hermit again.*] And you flew

in one of them air-ships, did y'? Wall, wall, don't that beat all? I've heerd tell on 'em, but I never thought I'd live to see one. And you saved my life, and brung me here in a air-ship.

BILLY.

It came pretty near being your last flight, too. If I hadn't lighted here and put you to bed just when I did you'd been flying up toward the pearly gates this very minute.

ISHMAEL.

[*In a dazed manner.*] When did all this happen? I feel kinder dazed and don't seem able to recollect things real good.

BILLY.

Yesterday.

ISHMAEL.

Yes. I kinder remember now. Somebody put me to bed. I hate beds. Ain't been in a bed before fer over twenty years. There was a woman bendin' over me in there, wa'n't there?

BILLY.

Yes, but you saw her and let out such a screech that it frightened her and she ran away.

ISHMAEL.

[*Laughs cackling laugh.*] Frightened her, hay? I'm glad of it. I'm glad of it. I didn't want her 'round. I hain't got no use fer women.

BILLY.

Don't like water, don't like swimming, don't like beds and don't like women. Some nut!

ISHMAEL.

What say?

BILLY.

I said [*with a peculiar pronunciation*] "some nut"; that's an expression in French. I learned it in the trenches.

ISHMAEL.

So you were in the trenches, hay? Shake hands agin. I heerd we had a war over in the trenches, but I never met no soldiers who's been in it. How'd it come out?

BILLY.

Eagle right on top.

ISHMAEL.

I might 'a' knowed it. And so you was in it. Wall, wall! You see me bein' a hermit up thar in the mountains I don't hear much of what's goin' on.

BILLY.

[*Snaps fingers and sings.*] He's a little mountain flower, growing wilder every hour.

ISHMAEL.

[*Looks at him in astonishment.*] Say, young feller, sump'm's the matter with you, sure. [*Taps his forehead.*] You ain't right, er sump'm.

BILLY.

Just a little effervescent, uncle, just a little effervescent.

ISHMAEL.

Wall, I cal'late it's all right. You saved my life and I guess you kin be effervescent, ef you want to.

BILLY.

Say, you're not a married man, are you?

ISHMAEL.

Who, me? Wall, not so as you kin notice it. It's rheumatism makes me look this way.

BILLY.

You must be a good deal younger than you look.

ISHMAEL.

That's right. Oncet I was young and happy as you are, but look at me now. I trusted a woman.

BILLY.

What did she do?

ISHMAEL.

Me. She was my wife.

BILLY.

Oh, so you *have* been married.

ISHMAEL.

Yep, but she run away with a Baptist preacher and I ain't seen her since.

[*Enter NANCY and AGGIE down stairs at rear*
R. *The men do not see them.*]

BILLY.

[*To ISHMAEL.*] There, there, don't get excited. You might get dizzy again like you did yesterday.

ISHMAEL.

I'm all right now, but I want to git away from here. Women folks around jest seem to pizen the

air. I wanter git back to the top of the mountain where I'll never hear a woman's voice, never speak to one, er see one. I wanter git up so high in the mountains that they can't git at me. I never want to see —

NANCY.

[Comes down c., between BILLY and ISHMAEL.]
Good-morning.

ISHMAEL.

[Jumps high in fright.] Greasy grasshoppers, a woman! Whar's my pants? What did you do with my clothes? [Rushes out at R.]

AGGIE.

[Comes down L.] Was that the hermit?

BILLY.

[At R.] Yes, didn't he look like it?

AGGIE.

Oh, I thought he'd be all dressed up in beads and feathers and things. [Pause; she crosses to c., speaking to BILLY.] Say, mister, will you lemme have a ride in your air-ship?

NANCY.

[At L. c.] Aggie!

AGGIE.

[At R. c.] Aw, what's wrong with that?

BILLY.

[At R.] Why, certainly, if your family will allow it.

AGGIE.

Then it's all off. My family never allow nothing.
[Enter BORDEN, coming down stairs.]

BORDEN.

Good-morning.

BILLY.

Good-morning.

BORDEN.

Did you finally get the old man to bed?

BILLY.

No, I left him here asleep. He never heard you come in.

BORDEN.

Have you met my sisters? Nancy, this is Mr. Billy.

BILLY.

[Bows.] Pleased, I'm sure.

NANCY.

Thank you.

AGGIE.

[Coughs to attract BORDEN'S attention.] Hm!
You got another sister, too. I'm little but don't forget I'm still on earth.

BORDEN.

Oh, yes. Mr. Billy, this is Aggie.

AGGIE.

[*Crosses and shakes hands with BILLY vigorously.*] Say, I'm awful glad to know you. All of the girls are perfectly crazy about aviators. And I think you're the bravest man—rescuing the hermit and everything.

BORDEN.

[*At L. door.*] Come, Aggie, breakfast is ready.

AGGIE.

In a minute. Are you going to eat now, Mr. Billy?

BILLY.

No. I have to look after my patient first.

AGGIE.

Come to our table when you come in. I want to make that old maid Miss Match jealous. She's got it in for me 'cause I stepped on the tail of her cat. [*Enter BUB from C. E., coming from rear L.*

BUB.

Say, Mr. Borden, what you think?

BORDEN.

[*Down L.*] What is it, Dusenberry?

BUB.

[*Near him.*] Miss Match borrowed your flivver about an hour ago and driv down to the village.

AGGIE.

Well of all the nerve!

NANCY.

Aggie!

BORDEN.

Oh, that's all right. I suppose she'll be back soon.

BUB.

I jist thought I'd let you know, that's all. Seems kinder suspicious to me, her runnin' off with your flivver and everything.

BORDEN.

It's all right. Come, girls.

[NANCY and AGGIE cross to him at L.

BUB.

Breakfast is all ready. Got ham and waffles and grape-nuts, grape-fruit and eatin' grapes. I ain't had so much to eat since I waited table at —— [insert local name] weddin'.

[Exit, C. E. and out rear L.

AGGIE.

Oh, let's hurry. I always want to be first in the dining-room.

[Exit, L.

BORDEN.

Aggie!

[Exit, L.

NANCY.

We'll have to eat by ourselves, I suppose. Mr. Greener hasn't come home yet, has he?

BILLY.

I don't think so.

NANCY.

Isn't it odd? I've been here two days and haven't met him yet. [Exit, L. AGGIE looks in at L.

AGGIE.

Say, Mr. Billy, you'd better hurry if you want to git a good breakfast.

BILLY.

I'll be in presently.

AGGIE.

I'll wait for you. [Throws kiss at him.] See you later, Billy. [Exit, L.

BILLY.

[Down R.] Not if I see you first. [Sits at small table. Soft music: Chorus of "Long, Long Trail." BILLY reads book. Enter MARY down stairs; she comes down L. BILLY sees her, rises and crosses eagerly to her, C.] Why, how do you do, Miss Blake?

MARY.

[Shakes hands with him at C.] How do you do, Mr. Billy? [End music.

BILLY.

Mrs. Gray said you were here. This is a delightful surprise. How are you?

MARY.

Splendid. And you—you've quite recovered, haven't you?

BILLY.

Quite. I don't look much like the man in the hospital now, do I, Miss Blake?

MARY.

I'm glad you are well. Your case was very puzzling—[*pause; looks at him*] and so were you.

BILLY.

Was I? How?

MARY.

You disappeared so suddenly.

BILLY.

Discharged as cured.

MARY.

But no one seemed to know when you left or where you went.

BILLY.

That was part of the game.

MARY.

The game?

BILLY.

Sure. I was in the secret service, you know.

MARY.

No, I didn't know. But that explains everything. We all wondered how you happened to be in the thick of the battle wearing civilian clothes.

BILLY.

I was after a couple of spies in our own lines, and I generally get what I go after.

MARY.

You generally get what you go after?

BILLY.

They were Germans disguised as doughboys giving vital information to the enemy. They had a secret wire with them wherever they went. I said I'd get it. [*Slight pause.*] And I did.

MARY.

And the spies?

BILLY.

[*Lightly.*] Oh, I got them, too.

MARY.

And you attacked that dugout. I heard about that. You got them, too.

BILLY.

Yeah, after a while. But they nearly got me. Not quite, you know—just nearly. It was a tough pull getting over that little dugout scrap, but I wouldn't have missed it for the world.

MARY.

Why?

BILLY.

Because it gave me a chance to meet you.

MARY.

I didn't think you'd even remember me.

BILLY.

I'll never forget you. By George, it seems only yesterday—those days in the old hospital near Château-Thierry. Do you remember that last evening in the purple shadows of the French twilight when you sang the "Long, Long Trail"?

MARY.

[*Softly.*] I remember.

BILLY.

I believe that was what made me well enough to leave the hospital. You sat by the window with your little guitar and sang to me. I'll never forget it. I could see one little star shining through the window. A star of hope.

MARY.

[*Sits at the piano.*] I always love that song.
[*Sings the chorus softly.*]

BILLY.

Thank you. There's a long, long trail winding down the path of every one's dream, isn't there?

MARY.

Yes. [*Pause.*] But mine is a lonely trail.

BILLY.

Lonely? Why?

MARY.

There's a long, long night of waiting until my dreams all come true.

BILLY.

Till the day when I'll be going down the long, long trail with you. *[Takes her hands.]*

MARY.

[Gently removes her hands from his.] We don't know what to say to each other, do we? That's because we don't really know each other—not so much. I heard you were here last night and I've been thinking a great deal since.

BILLY.

Since you heard I was here?

MARY.

Yes. What sort of a girl did you imagine me to be back there in the hospital?

BILLY.

The sort of a girl you are.

MARY.

What sort of a girl am I?

BILLY.

You are unusual.

MARY.

Why?

BILLY.

You are different from the girls I know.

MARY.

[*Laughs nervously.*] You don't know what to say. Really you know very little about me. You have everything to find out.

BILLY.

[*Slowly and gravely.*] And do you want me to find everything out?

MARY.

[*Starts.*] What do you mean by that?

BILLY.

I was just wondering if you really wanted me to know the real Mary Blake. Sometimes in the hospital I used to think you were worrying about something. Won't you let me help you? Won't you? Maybe I can—that's part of my business, in the secret service, you know. I believe I could help you, if you'd let me.

MARY.

No one can help me. I don't ask help. All I ask is to be let alone—to be given the chance that every woman should have. That's all I want—a chance, a chance to make good.

BILLY.

Mary, I'm your friend. After all you did for me over there in the hospital, don't you believe it? Won't you trust me?

MARY.

I have told you all I can.

BILLY.

Mary, did you ever know Bell Summers?

MARY.

[Starts.] Yes. Why do you ask me that?

BILLY.

Do you know the police are looking for her? [Pause; MARY is silent and turns away from him.] She is the notorious Getaway Bell. She is wanted for the Watertown bank robbery. Plain clothes men are scouring the country looking for her. They know she was headed this way. Have you seen her?

MARY.

Why do you ask me that?

BILLY.

You said you knew her. Mary, I want to help you. I want to be your friend. That night over there in France when I asked you to be my wife you said we could never be anything but friends. Now I'll take you at your word. I'm going to be your friend. This Bell Summers is a crook, a dangerous crook, known to the police as Getaway Bell, because she always manages to escape. Did you know that? [After slight pause, MARY nods her head in assent.] I thought I'd put you wise, that's all. This time she can't make a getaway. We're after her, and we're going to get her. Understand? It may be a matter of weeks—or months—or years, but we're going to get her.

MARY.

You have a clue?

BILLY.

Yes, Mary, I have a clue.

MARY.

Suppose—*[speaks with difficulty]* suppose she were a friend of mine—a relative. Would you blame me for helping her? Suppose I were a criminal myself.

BILLY.

You?

MARY.

It's true. I am an ex-convict.

BILLY.

Mary!

MARY.

Now you see why I would not consent to marry you. You see I can never be anything else than what I am—I can't go straight—they won't let me. If the police learn I am here they will arrest me on some trumped-up charge to find out what I know of Getaway Bell.

BILLY.

[Goes to her and takes her hands, looks in her eyes.] You're straight now, Mary.

MARY.

[Hesitates, then looks at him.] Yes, I'm straight now.

BILLY.

Then I'm going to help you keep straight.

MARY.

Do you think I can do it?

BILLY.

I know you can. Now, tell me the whole story.

MARY.

After I finished my course in high school my father died and I went to Watertown to work in a department store. [*Speaks with difficulty.*] One day—some things were missing from the stock—and one of the detectives found a fur neck-piece in my locker hidden in my coat. I—I didn't take it. I didn't, I didn't! It was a frame-up. I was arrested and convicted on circumstantial evidence. I spent fourteen months in the penitentiary. Fourteen months, Mr. Billy, and I was innocent! After my release I couldn't get work, my record was against me. I was desperate. I didn't know what to do. I went to New York, but it was the same old story over again. Then I met a woman who had been in prison with me. She gave me a home. She said she would help me. I had no money and I was alone in New York—alone and hungry. I went with her. A week later I learned that she was connected with a band of thieves. I escaped from the house and volunteered for work in France. I became a nurses' helper and was sent overseas. I tried to live down the past, I tried to forget, but the memory of those prison days haunted me; everywhere I went I seemed to see the iron bars and the stripes and the stone walls. I can't forget—no matter what I do—no matter where I go, I can't forget. I can't forget. [*Sobs on table.*]

BILLY.

I am glad you have told me this. [*Takes her hands.*] You need a friend, one who can shield you and protect you. Mary, I will be that friend.

MARY.

You believe my story?

BILLY.

Every word. [*Enter KITTIE from L.*

KITTIE.

'Scuse me, Miss Mary, but how many helpings ob waffles am I supposed to gib dat little Aggie chile? She's done et four and I'm skeerd ob her digestion. Her folks say she can't hab no more and she say she gwine to tell about de thousand-dollar Liberty Bond 'less'n she gits what she wants. Mighty unpacifying, mighty unpacifying!

[*Enter MISS MATCH from rear L. She stands in C. E., unobserved by the others.*

AGGIE.

[*Outside at L.*] I will have it. I will! I'll have what I want to eat or know the reason why.

[*Enter AGGIE from L., followed by BORDEN and NANCY.*

BORDEN.

Do you want to be sick? You come right upstairs to your room. My patience is at an end.

[*Takes AGGIE roughly by the arm. ISHMAEL appears in doorway at R., unobserved.*

AGGIE.

You let me alone; if you don't I'll tell everybody where I found that thousand-dollar Liberty Bond out in the front yard.

BORDEN.

Aggie!

[*Jerks her to C. E and up-stairs, followed by*
NANCY. ISHMAEL *disappears.*

KITTIE.

Thousand-dollar Liberty Bond? What's dat chile talkin' about?

MARY.

Oh, that was just some childish nonsense.

MISS MATCH.

[*Comes down R.*] I had the nicest little spin. I've been clear down to the village and back. I love to get up early in the morning and take a ride. It gives one such an appetite.

KITTIE.

Breakfast is ready.

MISS MATCH.

I'll go right in. Have you had your breakfast, Miss Blake?

MARY.

Not yet.

MISS MATCH.

I hate to eat alone. Why don't you introduce me to the gentleman?

MARY.

[*At c.*] Miss Match, this is Mr. Billy.

MISS MATCH.

[*Crosses to him at L. c. and shakes hands.*] Oh, I've been wanting to meet you ever since you came. It was so brave of you to rescue that old man. And so romantic! In an air-ship and everything. Just like one of the heroes of olden times. You ought to have a golden medal pinned to your chest by some fair damsel. I think you are just wonderful. As a reward for your bravery I'll let you eat breakfast with me.

BILLY.

[*With mock politeness.*] Oh, thank you.

MISS MATCH.

[*Crosses to door at L.*] I have several gentlemen friends in the air service. That is what makes me so interested in you. [*Comes back to him and takes his arm.*] I suppose you have many queer experiences and meet many queer people.

BILLY.

[*Significantly.*] Oh, yes. I meet queer people all the time. Sometimes I eat breakfast with them.
[*Crossing to door L. with her.*]

MISS MATCH.

You surely don't think I'm queer, do you? My gentlemen friends have often told me that I was very, very interesting, but I've never been called queer. But then, of course, I'm not like other girls.

BILLY.

No, I don't think you are. You're quite unique.

MISS MATCH.

Oh, you say the most flattering things. I knew I was going to be fascinated the minute I laid eyes on you. [*They go out at L., she chattering.*]

KITTIE.

[*Throws up her hands.*] Lawsy, lawsy, dat old maid shore is working hard to get a man. Ain' dat scan'lous? And dat pore innocent young man jes' swallowed de bait—hook, line and sinker. Um, um! Right before our very eyes. [*Goes to L.*] First thing we knows she gwine kidnap dat boy 'fore he gets his second wind. Mighty scan'lous, mighty scan'lous!

[*Exit, L. BUB enters C. E., coming from rear L.*]

BUB.

[*Coming down R.*] Say, Miss Blake.

MARY.

[*Starts.*] Yes?

BUB.

[*Seriously.*] Did you know there was a detective here in the house?

MARY.

A detective?

BUB.

Yep. And he's wise to a whole lot of things, too.

MARY.

Who is it?

BUB.

Me. I'm a detective. Took three lessons already in a correspondence school. That's the reason I'm so suspicious. Say, did you ever see a crook?

MARY.

Why do you ask?

BUB.

I jest kinda want to git a line on what they look like close up. You been over in France. There must have been a lot of crooks over there.

MARY.

I don't know.

[BILLY *appears at door L., unobserved.*]

BUB.

First I had my suspicions of Mr. Billy, 'cause he got a telygram writ in code, but I think he's on the level, all right, don't you?

MARY.

Yes, I know he is.

BILLY.

Thank you.

MARY.

[*Rising confused.*] Oh, I didn't know you were listening.

BILLY.

Has Mrs. Gray come down yet?

MARY.

No. I went to her room but she said she wasn't feeling well. She has a headache. I must take her up some breakfast. [*Crosses to L. door.*]

BILLY.

Tell her I've got some good news for her. It's great. Tell her that when she hears what I've got to tell her she'll forget she ever had a head, and tell her to prepare herself for a great shock. It's great news.

MARY.

Good news?

BILLY.

The best in the world.

MARY.

I'll tell her.

[*Exit, at L.*]

BILLY.

[*Looking after her.*] Great girl that.

BUB.

Betcher life. She used to be a nurse over in France.

BILLY.

I know—and she was a great nurse, too.

[*Enter ISHMAEL from R. wearing tattered coat and hat.*]

ISHMAEL.

I'm goin'.

BILLY.

Going? Not on your life. You haven't had your breakfast yet.

ISHMAEL.

Do I have to go in thar to git it? [*Points to L.*

BILLY.

Sure, that's the dining-room.

ISHMAEL.

I ain't et in a dining-room in nearly thirty years.

BILLY.

Oh, that's all right. They still use forks.

ISHMAEL.

I can't go in thar where there's a lot of women folks.

BILLY.

Why not?

ISHMAEL.

'Cause I don't want to associate with women.

BUB.

Ain't that peculiar?

ISHMAEL.

I'm goin' back to my cave in the mountains.

[*Starts for C. E.*

BILLY.

[*Dragging him back.*] Nothing doing. Absolutely nothing. You're liable to fall in the creek again.

ISHMAEL.

Say, I think I'm in a lunatic asylum. I never saw folks act so queer.

BILLY.

Never mind, uncle, never mind.

ISHMAEL.

But I want to get away.

BILLY.

Do you suppose I'm going to let you get away after all the trouble I've taken to land you?

ISHMAEL.

Land me?

BILLY.

[*Quickly.*] Out of the water, I mean. When I brought you to the shore, didn't I land you? Bub will bring you something to eat. Just wait in there. You'll be a regular ten-dollar-a-day guest and have your breakfast in bed.

ISHMAEL.

Honest, I don't understand a word you're talking about. But if you think you kin charge me ten dollars a day you're makin' a mistake. You can't charge me ten cents, 'cause I ain't got it.

BILLY.

Oh, never mind a little thing like that. You're here as the guest of the house. I've got to keep my eye on you, uncle. Why, you are the very first mystery I've ever solved.

BUB.

Gosh, is he a mystery?

ISHMAEL.

[*Savagely.*] No, I ain't. I ain't nothin' but just a hermit.

BILLY.

You'd better duck and get under cover.

ISHMAEL.

But I want to go home.

[*Enter MISS MATCH from L. with napkin tucked in her neck.*]

MISS MATCH.

Oh, there you are.

ISHMAEL.

A woman!

[*Exits quickly at R. with long strides.*]

MISS MATCH.

I thought you were coming back and I waited and waited and waited.

BUB.

She orter git a job in the dining-room. We need another waiter.

BILLY.

I had to look after my hermit. Bub, tell the cook to poach him a couple of eggs on toast and take him a cup of coffee.

MISS MATCH.

Don't you want to come back with me?

BILLY.

Oh, I'd just love to do that, but I've got to take care of the sick man.

MISS MATCH.

I'll see you after breakfast. I want you to show me your aeroplane. I'm just crazy about aeroplanes. Then we can take a nice little walk up the hill. Every morning I take a little tramp up to Sunset Rock.

BILLY.

That's nice.

BUB.

Where is he?

MISS MATCH.

Where is who?

BUB.

The little tramp. [*Dodges as she looks at him.*]
Don't you hit me.

MISS MATCH.

I'll hurry, Mr. Billy. [*Crosses to door at L.*]
Don't run away and leave me. [*Exit, at L.*]

BILLY.

Bub, hurry and see about Ishmael's breakfast.

BUB.

I'll bet a dollar he'll be gone the minute you leave him alone.

BILLY.

Then we mustn't leave him alone. Whatever happens the hermit has got to stay here until Mrs. Gray sees him.

BUB.

Why?

BILLY.

I can't tell you.

BUB.

Is it a mystery?

BILLY.

Something like it.

BUB.

Say, he ain't a crook, is he?

BILLY.

No.

BUB.

And yet it's a mystery. Maybe he's a long-lost heiress.

BILLY.

Hurry and get him something to eat or he'll be a corpse.

BUB.

All right. I allus *did* have my suspicions about him anyhow. [*Crosses to door at L.*] If you got any detective work to be did, Mr. Billy, jest call on me, 'cause I'm crazy to git the experience and satisfaction guaranteed.

[*Struts out at L. Enter BORDEN down stairs at rear R.*]

BILLY.

Mr. Borden!

BORDEN.

[*Comes down to him.*] Yes?

BILLY.

What did your little sister mean about finding a thousand-dollar bond in the front yard?

BORDEN.

Oh, did you hear her say that? Just a fairy tale, that's all. Aggie has been reading too much fiction lately.

BILLY.

I thought maybe it was one of the missing bonds from the Watertown bank robbery.

BORDEN.

What would it be doing here?

BILLY.

That's just what I am trying to find out. I thought that maybe you could help me. You're the prosecuting attorney of this county, aren't you?

BORDEN.

Yes, but I don't know who you are.

BILLY.

[*Hands him a card.*] Party by the name of Billy.

BORDEN.

[*Reads card, pauses, looks at BILLY.*] So you are with the Ryan Detective Agency?

BILLY.

Yes, I'm from the Denver branch.

BORDEN.

Then come up-stairs, I have something to show you.

BILLY.

One of the missing bonds?

[*As they cross to stairs.*]

BORDEN.

You've guessed it. Though I can't imagine how it got here in the Silver Trout Inn.

[*They go up stairs, and go out rear R. There is a slight pause then ISHMAEL opens the door at R. quietly and enters, looking around. He carries his shoes in his hand. He sneaks to C. E., looks up stairs and is about to exit at rear L. when BUB enters from L. and sees him.*]

BUB.

Halt! [*Slight pause, as ISHMAEL looks at him.*]
You're discovered.

ISHMAEL.

I'm goin' home. [BUB *rushes to him and grabs him by the arm.*] Say, what's the matter with all you folks anyhow? Can't I leave if I want to?

BUB.

Leave? Wall, I should say not.

ISHMAEL.

It's a free country, ain't it?

BUB.

Yeah, I guess so, when Congress ain't in session.

ISHMAEL.

I thought you was goin' to git me something to eat.

BUB.

That's right. The cook's fixin' it now. Just go back and lie down.

ISHMAEL.

I don't want to lie down. [BUB *leads and pushes him to door at R.*] I want to git away, I tell you.

BUB.

[*Grabs ISHMAEL's shoes from his hand.*] Gimme them shoes and I'll git 'em shined fer you.

[*Starts toward L.*]

ISHMAEL.

You gimme back them shoes. What you tryin' to do—rob me?

[*Enter GENE from rear L. and through C. E.*]

BUB.

Oh, Mr. Greener, the old man wants to leave and Mr. Billy said he's got to stay. I can't do nothin' with him.

GENE.

What's the matter, uncle?

ISHMAEL.

I wanna go back to the mountain.

BUB.

He's crazy and we gotta keep him here.

[GENE and BUB push ISHMAEL off at R., both talking in a soothing way to him while he objects loudly.]

GENE.

[Closes the door.] Now all you've got to do is to watch the door.

BUB.

I got his shoes, anyhow. He can't git back to the mountain without no shoes. Now I'll git his breakfast.

[Exit, at L. Enter BILLY down stairs at rear R. He starts to exit at L.]

GENE.

Oh, Mr. Billy!

BILLY.

[Turns.] Yes?

GENE.

I just came up from the village. I have something for you.

BILLY.

[Crosses down R. to GENE.] What is it?

[NANCY enters down stairs from rear R. and crosses down to door at L.

GENE.

They told me to bring it up to you. It's very important. I wasn't sure I'd find you here, but I thought I'd take a chance. [Sees NANCY and is much impressed.] Oh! [Arranges collar, tie, etc.

NANCY.

[At door L.] Miss Blake said she wanted to see you, Mr. Billy. She'll be down in a minute.

[Crosses to c.

BILLY.

Thank you.

[NANCY sits at piano and runs hands very lightly over the keys.

GENE.

[Down R. with BILLY.] Say, who's the queen in pink?

BILLY.

Oh, a girl. What did you say you had for me?

GENE.

Yes, of course I can see she's a girl, but who is she?

BILLY.

Miss Borden. She's here with her brother. Was it a package?

GENE.

[*Looking at NANCY.*] A package? What do you mean package?

BILLY.

The thing you brought me from the village.

GENE.

Say, she's some queen, isn't she? Why don't you introduce me?

BILLY.

Why, certainly. Miss Borden!

NANCY.

[*Rises.*] Yes?

BILLY.

I want to present Mr. Greener.

GENE.

[*Crosses to her quickly and shakes hands.*] Delighted, I'm sure. Have you been here long?

NANCY.

Two days.

GENE.

Great place, isn't it?

NANCY.

Oh, delightful.

GENE.

Got a golf course and everything.

NANCY.

Do you like to play golf?

GENE.

I'm a regular golf-hound.

NANCY.

So am I. But I've been waiting for two days to find some one to play with.

BILLY.

[*Crosses to GENE'S R.*] Didn't you have something for me?

GENE.

In a minute. In a minute. [*To NANCY.*] How would you like to go out and look at the links?

NANCY.

Fine. This would be a dandy morning for a game.

GENE.

I'm on—are you?

NANCY.

I'll be ready in a minute. Wait till I get my hat.

BILLY.

What was it?

GENE.

My clubs are on the front porch.

NANCY.

I won't be a minute.

[*Crosses to stairs, followed by GENE.*]

GENE.

You can't be too quick for me.

BILLY.

[Follows GENE.] Say! Didn't you bring——

GENE.

[Turns to BILLY.] Just a moment. [Turns to NANCY.] I'll wait for you right here.

NANCY.

All righty. [Runs up stairs and exits rear R.

BILLY.

Now, if you can give me that moment you spoke about——

GENE.

Say, she's some girl.

BILLY.

Oh, yes. But you said——

GENE.

I'm perfectly dippy about blondes.

[Looks up stairs.

BILLY.

Say! What did you bring me from the village?

GENE.

A telegram. They said it was very important. Let me see, what did I do with it? [Feels in pockets.] I know I had it. [Looks up stairs.] Say, I'm awfully glad I happened to register here at this Inn.

BILLY.

So am I.

GENE.

Fine little girl, isn't she? What was I looking for? Oh, yes—your telegram. There it is.

[Hands it to him.]

BILLY.

Much obliged.

GENE.

Oh, that's all right. *[Enter ISHMAEL from R.]*

ISHMAEL.

I want to go home. I want some breakfast. I want my shoes.

BILLY.

[Rushes to him and leads him to door R.] Go on in there and stay. It isn't time for you yet.

[Enter BUB from L. with covered tray.]

BUB.

Say, is he trying to make a get away again?

ISHMAEL.

You ain't got no right to keep me here.

BILLY.

Here's your breakfast now. Take him in there, Bub, and put him to bed.

BUB.

Come on.

[BILLY pushes ISHMAEL off at R. BUB exits]

at R. BILLY stands down R. and reads telegram. NANCY comes down stairs wearing hat.

NANCY.

Was I long?

GENE.

[At the foot of the stairs.] No, you're a wonderful girl.

NANCY.

Wait till you see me on the links.

[Goes out rear L., followed by GENE. Enter MARY down stairs. She comes down c.]

MARY.

Mrs. Gray is better now and she is very anxious to see you.

BILLY.

I'm sorry. I can't see her now. Just got a sudden call to New York.

MARY.

But she is all excited about what you have to tell her.

BILLY.

Tell her that I've found our man.

MARY.

Her husband?

BILLY.

Yes.

MARY.

Oh! After all these years—where is he?

BILLY.

In there.

[Points to R.]

MARY.

The hermit?

BILLY.

Yes. Bring her down right away, as he is trying to get back to his cave. Break the news to her gently. I've got to be in New York by noon.

MARY.

Can't you see Mrs. Gray?

BILLY.

Haven't time. Bring her down and don't let the hermit get away. I'll be back late to-night.

[Exit, at R. Enter MISS MATCH from L.]

MISS MATCH.

Who was that?

MARY.

It was Mr. Billy. He's going away.

MISS MATCH.

To New York?

MARY.

Yes. He said he had to be there by noon. I must find Mrs. Gray.

[Exit, up stairs. Enter BILLY from R., wear-

ing aviator's cap and goggles. He is followed by BUB, who carries ISHMAEL'S clothes.

BILLY.

Come on and help me start. Hurry up!

BUB.

Say, I stole his clothes. I guess he can't escape now.

BILLY.

[Hurries to C. E.] Good boy! Come on.

[Exit, C. E., going to rear L., followed by BUB.]

MISS MATCH.

[Down L.] It worked. It worked. *[Triumphantly.]* And now we're safe. *[Goes to window.]* He's off! *[Waves her hand.]* Good-bye, Mr. Billy, good-bye. *[Turns to audience.]* Safe! *[Speaks grimly.]* I think that Mr. Billy is making his last flight! *[Crosses to door at L.]* His last flight!

[Gives a short, sneering laugh and exits at L. Enter MARY down stairs, followed by MRS. GRAY.]

MARY.

You must be calm. You can't stand all this excitement.

MRS. GRAY.

[At c.] I will be calm. Oh, where is he? Where is he? I've waited all these years.

ISHMAEL.

[*Outside at R.*] Come back with them clothes!
Come back, I say! Help, help, thieves!

MRS. GRAY.

That doesn't sound like John's voice.

MARY.

[*At R. C.*] You must be brave.
[*Enter ISHMAEL from R. wearing socks and dressing robe.*]

ISHMAEL.

Where are they? [*Sees ladies.*] Oh!
[*Starts to exit at R., but MARY stands in his way.*]

MARY.

Stop!

ISHMAEL.

What do you mean? Let me go!

MRS. GRAY.

[*Moves close to him, looks at him intently.*] It's
a mistake—it's all a mistake.

ISHMAEL.

You let me alone. [*Exit, at R.*]

MARY.

[*After a pause, goes to MRS. GRAY, who is almost about to faint.*] That was not the man?

MRS. GRAY.

No. I never saw that man before yesterday. It's all a mistake.

[MARY *takes her in her arms and* MRS. GRAY *sobs on her shoulder.*

CURTAIN

ACT IV

SCENE.—*The same as before. Time, an afternoon a few days later. Lights on full as in Act III.*

At the rise of the curtain MARY is discovered seated L. C. talking to KITTIE, who stands at L.

MARY.

When they come, Kittie, you may put them in the third floor rooms.

KITTIE.

Yas'm. Say, Miss Mary, our hotel shore am doin' a good business.

MARY.

Yes, it's nearly full now.

KITTIE.

How long is dat old man in 'dere [*points to R.*] gwine to stay?

MARY.

Mr. Billy told us to keep him here until he came back. He thought he was Mrs. Gray's husband but he was mistaken. I can't see any use of keeping him any longer.

KITTIE.

No'm, I can't neither. He was crazy to leave the first day but for de las' two or three days he

seems right contented. And eat! honest, I never saw a mortal man eat so much like he does, 'less'n it's dat chile Aggie Borden, and she hain't a man.

MARY.

Be sure and give the third floor a good cleaning, Kittie. Bub will help you.

KITTIE.

Yas'm, dat's jes' what I'z aimin' to do. [*Crosses to door L.*] How long is Miss Mabel gwine to be away?

MARY.

I got a letter from her this morning. She'll probably be back this afternoon and her husband will be with her.

KITTIE.

Ain't it magnanimous dat she's located her husband after all dese years? She ain't seen him fer nearly twenty-five years and has been lookin' fer him all dat time. And I'z had three husbands in de las' six years and am now on de lookout for Number Four. Dis yere bein' a unattached widow lady is powerful lonesome, Miss Mary, powerful lonesome. Looks like Miss Mabel never could recognize her man after all dese years. I'z plumb forgot what my first one looked like, 'cept dat he was a kinda cinnamon colored, no-count coon from Memphis.

MARY.

You arranged Number Six for Mr. Gray, didn't you?

KITTIE.

Yas'm, it's all arranged. I wonder how come Miss Mabel to know where her husband was located at.

MARY.

The Ryan Detective Agency located him on a small island in the St. Lawrence. They wrote to Mrs. Gray and she went there at once. Then she sent me a telegram that the search was at an end.

KITTIE.

I'm powerful glad. Do you reckon she's satisfied wif him, now she's got him?

MARY.

Her letter this morning said she was the happiest woman in the world.

KITTIE.

Dat shore is nice. I don't blame her one bit. [*Long sigh.*] Lawsy, I wisht I was a married lady once more. I'm gwine clean up dat third floor now.

[*Exit, L. Enter MISS MATCH down stairs from rear R.*]

MISS MATCH.

I have everything packed up.

MARY.

You expect to catch the evening train?

MISS MATCH.

Yes. I'll write to you when I get to Canada.

MARY.

You are sure you can get over the border?

MISS MATCH.

Sure? There's nothing to be afraid of now.

MARY.

The Ryan agency doesn't usually give up. I can't understand it at all.

MISS MATCH.

I don't worry. I got rid of one of their men and I think I'm able to get away.

MARY.

Got rid of one? You mean Mr. Billy.

MISS MATCH.

Yes, I mean Mr. Billy.

MARY.

Where is he? [*Pause; MISS MATCH looks at her in a tantalizing manner. MARY grasps her arm.*] Where is he? What has happened to him? I have heard nothing from him for four days. Where is he?

MISS MATCH.

You'll never hear from him again.

MARY.

[*Alarmed.*] You mean ——

MISS MATCH.

I mean that he fell into my trap.

MARY.

How?

MISS MATCH.

I made a copy of that first code message he received. I worked it out and learned that he was after Getaway Bell. That was his real purpose here.

MARY.

Well?

MISS MATCH.

You remember the morning he went away? I went to the village early that morning and sent him another message in the same code. It was a decoy calling him to New York.

MARY.

Where in New York? [*Looks at her; pause; MISS MATCH is silent.*] Tell me! I've got to know. [*Grabs MISS MATCH and forces her to her knees, MARY'S hands around her neck.*] He's disappeared. Where is he? Tell me! Where is he?
[*Chokes her.*]

MISS MATCH.

Don't! don't!

MARY.

I won't let you go. I'll turn you over to the police. I'll go to prison myself. Tell me where he is!

MISS MATCH.

I don't know.

MARY.

You can't deceive me any longer. You sent him a decoy telegram. It called him to New York. Where is he?

MISS MATCH.

The letter told him to go to the rear of Donovan's place.

MARY.

[Releases her; staggers back in terror; speaks in a whisper.] Where Croak is hiding? [Pause; then in horror.] And he's disappeared. [Whispers.] Croak has killed him.

MISS MATCH.

Maybe he got away.

MARY.

Croak has killed him. Oh, I know Croak McGowan. He's killed him.

MISS MATCH.

Then come with me to-night. You can make a new start in Canada. We'll get over the border and everything will be all right. [Pause.] Why don't you say something? You'll go with me?

MARY.

No! I'll go to New York. I'll find out the truth. And if Croak McGowan has killed the man I love I'll send him to the chair [turns to MISS MATCH savagely], and I'll send you to the chair!

MISS MATCH.

Bell!

MARY.

Don't call me Bell. I'm Mary Blake and I've always been Mary Blake. You are Getaway Bell.

[ISHMAEL *appears at door, R., and listens unobserved.*

MISS MATCH.

The police have your record. They have your picture and beneath it is the name of Bell Summers.

MARY.

I'll tell them the truth, and they'll know it's so because they'll see it in my face. I'll tell them how you used the name of Getaway Bell for me to shield yourself from the consequences of your own crimes. Oh, you worked your game cleverly enough with your false clues and your bits of evidence to make the police think that I was the criminal. But it's gone too far, it's all gone too far. I'm going to tell them the truth.

MISS MATCH.

Tell them what you like. They'll recognize your picture, they'll look up your record—then who will believe you?

ISHMAEL.

I will.

MISS MATCH.

What!

MARY.

The hermit!

ISHMAEL.

That's what you folks call me, but in New York I'm generally known as Cornelius Ryan.

MISS MATCH.

You've nothing on me. There is the woman you're after. There is Getaway Bell.

[Points to MARY.]

ISHMAEL.

So I heard you say, but I rather think Getaway Bell will get away, just as she's always done. [Takes MISS MATCH'S arm.] The woman I am after is Lizzie McGowan, the wife of Croak McGowan, who was caught last night in the rear of Donovan's place in New York.

MISS MATCH.

Croak caught? It isn't true. It's a frame-up.

ISHMAEL.

The district attorney's flivver is outside, Liz. You and I are going to take a little joy-ride down to the village and catch the evening train for New York. The game is up.

MARY.

Tell me what has become of Mr. Billy.

ISHMAEL.

Well, he's made a pretty good showing for himself down in the city. He captured Croak McGowan. [Laughs.] But I fooled him. He's from our Denver agency and had never seen me. They sent him here to find Mrs. Gray's husband and we

gave him a tip that Getaway Bell was in this part of the country. But I thought I might be of some help to the lad, so when I saw his air-ship headed over the mountain I just topples into the stream and let him pick me out.

MARY.

Then he is safe?

ISHMAEL.

Well, I don't know as you'd call it safe. There's something the matter with him.

MARY.

What is it?

ISHMAEL.

Love, I reckon. I thought at first you were the real crook, Miss Blake, and I wanted to test the boy. That's why I hid outside in the shadows of the trees the night we came here. That's why I slept in front of the fire and nearly gave myself the rheumatism. But the lad's true blue and has covered himself with glory. He ought to be here now.

[MISS MATCH *slowly and stealthily crosses to window.*

MARY.

He's coming here?

ISHMAEL.

Well, I reckon all the king's horses and all the king's men couldn't keep him away from you. Come away from that window, Lizzie; you're liable to catch cold. Mary, just run up-stairs and bring down Lizzie's hat and coat. And you might bring

down that pack of Liberty Bonds. She's got it hid behind a piece of loose wall paper back of her bed. She won't need Liberty Bonds where she's going. [*Exit MARY up stairs at rear R.*] You might as well sit down, Lizzie, and be comfortable.

MISS MATCH.

[*Panting in a terrible rage.*] You—you!

ISHMAEL.

Sit down and catch your breath. I've been waiting for this little flirtation for a long time. Ever since you began to shift the blame of all your little acts to Getaway Bell. Yes, the Ryan Detective Agency has had its eye on you for some time.

MISS MATCH.

How did you find me out?

ISHMAEL.

That's right, talk and be sociable. Well, here's where you made your little slip-up. We knew that Getaway Bell was in France as a nurse and yet the so-called Getaway Bell robberies went on just the same. We just put one and one together and made two; you were one and Croak was one, and that solved the whole thing.

[*Enter BILLY from C. E., coming from rear L.*

BILLY.

[*Coming to ISHMAEL and shaking hands with him.*] Mr. Ryan, I'm ashamed of myself.

ISHMAEL.

Why? We all make mistakes sometimes, even the youngest of us.

BILLY.

I could have sworn you were the missing John Gray.

ISHMAEL.

Oh, no. The missing John Gray was located a week before you came here. He was in the Cumberland Mountains and answered our advertisement for him. He thought his wife had been dead for years and was almost overcome when he learned of her long, long years of suffering.

BILLY.

[*Looks at MISS MATCH.*] Good-afternoon, Lizzie. Your husband is in the Tombs. He sent you his kindest regards. Where are all the folks?

ISHMAEL.

On a picnic up at Sunset Rock.

BILLY.

[*Disappointed.*] Oh!

[*Enter MARY down stairs with coat and hat and grip.*]

MARY.

[*Drops things at foot of the stairs and goes to BILLY with a glad cry.*] You're safe?

BILLY.

Safe and sound as a new-laid egg.

ISHMAEL.

Lizzie, I'm afraid we are intruding. The flivver awaits. Are you ready?

MISS MATCH.

[To MARY.] You'll do what you can for me, won't you?

MARY.

Yes, I'll do what I can.

MISS MATCH.

And, Mary, go straight. You got your big chance now. Take it, girl, go straight. I never had the chance. [*Changes tone.*] All right, Mr. Cornelius Ryan, let's be starting. [*Crosses to C. E. with him.*]

ISHMAEL.

Well, good luck, Billy. I'll see you at the office to-morrow.

BILLY.

All right, Mr. Ryan.

ISHMAEL.

Good-bye, Mary. He's a fine fellow. He fished me out of the river. [*Laughs.*] And he never suspected that I was his boss.

[*Exit, C. E. and out rear L., with MISS MATCH. Soft music: Chorus of "Long, Long Trail."*]

BILLY.

You've changed your mind about some things, haven't you, Mary?

MARY.

Yes.

BILLY.

You said over there in France that we could only be friends.

MARY.

There's a long, long night of waiting until our dreams all come true.

BILLY.

[*Takes her in his arms.*] But now I will be going down the long, long trail with you.

[*KITTIE appears in door at L., carrying tray of dishes. She sees them, drops the tray and throws up her arms.*

KITTIE.

For de land sakes! Excuse me. I knows how it is maself. Jest please kindly excuse me!

[*She exits at L. MARY and BILLY pay no attention to KITTIE'S interruption.*

CURTAIN.

NEW PLAYS AND BOOKS

— *Season 1925* —

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These playlets are reveries following the reading of three Shakespearian plays,—“Henry V,” “Much Ado About Nothing,” and “The Merchant of Venice.” There is no feeling at the end of a Shakespeare Comedy that the machinery has stopped moving and that the marionettes are packed away: on the contrary it must be a reader with little imagination who does not picture the characters living on beyond the curtain. That is what has been done in this collection. Prince Henry is seen after his edict of banishment against Falstaff, and edict whose very sternness indicates that it is not entirely serious. Beatrice and Benedick, the untameable, are seen in their home, trying to live the tame domestic life. Shylock is seen struggling against the tide of fate, and Jessica after her unpropitious marriage. All of the characters are from the plays except two servants. The sketches, though supplementary, are complete in themselves. Each has a clearly defined and developed plot and a climatic ending. The three plays in one volume. Price, 50 cents.

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— Season 1925 —

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